

Managing Through A Pandemic



A Guide for Every HR Professional

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In Partnership with IHRP



Foreword

We are delighted to launch the IHRP Covid-19 Playbook on 'Managing Through a Pandemic: A Guide for Every HR Professional'.

Since early 2020, Covid-19 has resulted in extraordinarily challenging and uncertain times for both individuals and organisations alike. The people agenda, namely safety and well-being, employee engagement, learning and productivity, has taken center stage at Boards and C-suite discussions as organisations grapple to deliver business outcomes. Our HR profession has therefore been thrust into the forefront of enabling companies and organisations to adjust to this new world of work.

In early April 2020, IHRP had set up a volunteer task force made up of senior HR professionals to support the community. More than 300 resources have been curated and made accessible online with over 3,000+ unique visitor views. This playbook is a useful guide to manage the 'here and now' and be future-ready in handling future pandemics from a HR perspective. The objective is to ensure that the current and next generation of HR Practitioners can benefit from the learnings of managing through Covid-19.

The Playbook was compiled through the collective contributions from members of the task force who are full-time HR professionals themselves, from a wide spectrum of industries. We thank Shane, Jernet, Leah and Rachel sincerely for their stellar efforts.

We hope that you will find it useful to steer your organisation so that we can emerge stronger as a community. Together we will see better days ahead!



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Chair, IHRP Covid-19 taskforce



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Introduction

The objective of this playbook is to provide an easy-to-reference guide on situations that a HR professional in Singapore may face during a pandemic crisis. During a pandemic crisis, it is critical that businesses remain calm and ensure that there are proper plans in place to navigate the situation. Businesses naturally place utmost importance on business continuity and sustainability in a crisis. As a HR professional, the ability to regulate the situation, and recommend sound people practices and decisions will be key factors to determine if HR is able to partner and value-add.

Remember that the crisis is here to stay for a period and the top priority for HR is to Put People First and consider what is beneficial for the business in the long run. There is no business if there are no people. Always hold the belief of doing what is right regardless of how challenging the situation is. A balance of what is needed in the short term and sustaining the long term will need to be kept in equilibrium.

In order to do so, a HR professional must understand the business, key stakeholders, internal operations / processes and its people. It is a situation full of change and hence always consider change management philosophy when transiting from one phase to another during the crisis. There could be many potential situations where HR stands in middle ground and would need to take tough decisions. During this time, HR would need to lead with Head, Heart and Guts.

How to Read the Playbook

This playbook is developed by a team of HR professionals based in Singapore. As much as we try to observe a global context, there may be some reference that are Singapore specific. In Singapore, prevention and response plans refer to the 'Disease Outbreak Response System Condition' (DORSCON), a colour-coded framework that reflects the corresponding severity of the outbreak. The framework provides general guidelines on what needs to be done to prevent and reduce the impact of infections.

DORSCON ALERT LEVELS (Disease Outbreak Response System Condition)				
	GREEN	YELLOW	ORANGE	RED
Nature of Disease	Disease is mild OR Disease is severe but does not spread easily from person to person (e.g. MERS, H7N9)	Disease is severe and spreads easily from person to person but is occurring outside Singapore. OR Disease is spreading in Singapore but is (a) Typically mild i.e only slightly more severe than seasonal influenza. Could be severe in vulnerable groups. (e.g. H1N1 pandemic) OR (b) being contained	Disease is severe AND spreads easily from person to person, but disease has not spread widely in Singapore and is being contained (e.g. SARS experience in Singapore)	Disease is severe AND is spreading widely
Impact on Daily Life	Minimal disruption e.g. border screening, travel advice	Minimal disruption e.g. additional measures at border and/or healthcare settings expected, higher work and school absenteeism likely	Moderate disruption e.g. quarantine, temperature screening, visitor restrictions at hospitals	Major disruption e.g. school closures, work from home orders, significant number of deaths.
Advice to Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be socially responsible: if you are sick, stay at home Maintain good personal hygiene Look out for health advisories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be socially responsible: if you are sick, stay at home Maintain good personal hygiene Look out for health advisories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be socially responsible: if you are sick, stay at home Maintain good personal hygiene Look out for health advisories Comply with control measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be socially responsible: if you are sick, stay at home Maintain good personal hygiene Look out for health advisories Comply with control measures Practise social distancing: avoid crowded areas

DORSCON takes into account:

- The current disease situation overseas
- How transmissible the disease is
- How likely it is to arrive in Singapore
- What impact it may have on Singapore's community

There are 4 statuses – Green, Yellow, Orange and Red, depending on the severity and spread of the disease. For each status, it details the impact on the community, such as the measures to be taken in daily life (e.g. temperature screening, border measures), and advice to the public (e.g. to look out for travel advisories).

<https://www.gov.sg/article/what-do-the-different-dorscon-levels-mean>

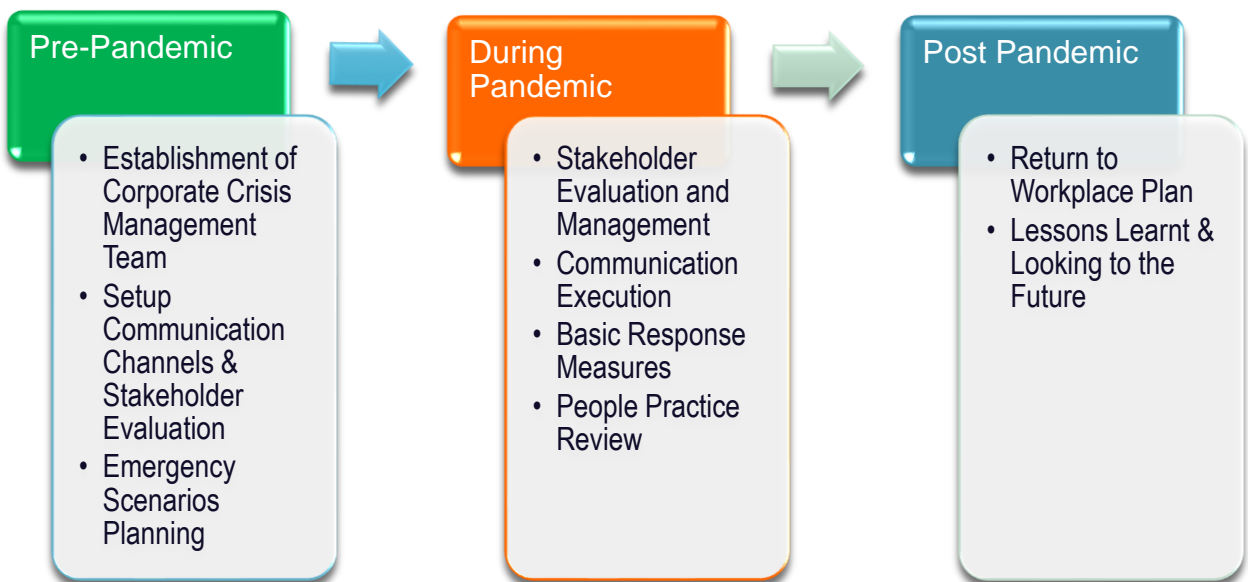
How to Read the Playbook

The playbook is structured to take you throughout each phase of a pandemic: Pre, During and Post.

The suggestions in the playbook for:

- Pre-pandemic corresponds to green and yellow which involves preparation work required if the DORSCON changes to orange or red.
- During pandemic corresponds to orange where measures such as circuit breaker, closing of borders are activated. This phase also includes the preparation for gradual re-opening of borders and workplaces as the situation comes under control.
- Post-pandemic corresponds to the recovery phase, return-to-work and opening of borders.

Each phase will cover a series of questions to guide HR in dealing with a pandemic. Within each phase, relevant guidelines, checklists and case studies will also be provided.



As you explore the playbook, we hope that the content will be able to guide you along and prepare you to go through another pandemic situation. Do note, however, that a decision taken by another company, being shared as a best practice, may or may not be ideal for your organisation. Differences in your organisation's response could be due to size of operations i.e. small vs large, scope of operations whether essentially local or with international offices and finally nature of business - essential vs non-essential services. Where appropriate, the Playbook will highlight these differences in response using appropriate scenarios and examples.

While specific measures and recommendations will vary depending on the phases, there are some important broad principles that will help guide and steer company's actions. These principles will also help better define HR's role and contribution throughout the pandemic.

1. Protect Employees

HR has a role in formulating policies, facilitating communications and reviewing remote work arrangements. Always consider our employees and ensuring their safety and interests are reviewed. This goes beyond the adherence of safe entry and distancing measures at workplace and compliance with government regulations.

2. Flexibility & Workforce Agility

HR has a role in helping companies conserve cash and better weather a volatile business environment. This involves building greater flexibility in staffing levels, compensation systems, as well as implementing cost-saving initiatives. With our continued focus on our employees, HR can also help identify productivity gains through job redesign / re-skilling and tapping into government subsidies and schemes.

3. Enable, Coach and Counsel

HR has a role in developing new capabilities and processes to enable working in a new normal. This involves building line managers' capabilities to stabilise business operations with business continuity planning, in place for essential capabilities; introducing new hybrid working arrangements and implementing new hire on-boarding and training.

4. Engagement to build a strong sense of purpose

HR has a role in engaging the workforce by being the conduit for the single-source of truth and creating alignment within and outside leadership team to reduce uncertainty amongst employees. HR enables a 2-way communication so that the concerns of employees are heard.

PRE-PANDEMIC

In this section, we will be taking a closer look at some of the recommended activities that businesses can consider during the early stage of a pandemic.

Pre-Pandemic: Establishment of Corporate Crisis Management Team

Question: What is a corporate crisis management team?

Many organisations may already have a crisis management team or environment, health and safety committee in place. In a global pandemic which may last for a substantial period, businesses need to remain agile constantly and hence it is important to include key management stakeholders in the response team. Business leaders and key representatives covering response to all important business stakeholder groups (e.g. government, customers, employees, and vendors) should be engaged to form the corporate crisis management team.

Question: Why do we need to set up a corporate crisis management team?

During a pandemic crisis, the situation is volatile and critical decisions need to be made within a short turnaround time. These decisions would cover areas such as business strategy (ranging from immediate to short- and long-term plans), communication and budgets. With a corporate crisis management team in place, important business stakeholders are brought together to enhance visibility and impact review of the situation ensuring that a holistic view is taken before decisions are made. Sometimes, joint decision-making is required to ensure better alignment for the right course of actions. It is crucial to set up this team to better priorities, response measures as well as communication within the organisation.

Question: What is the role of the corporate crisis management team?

The corporate team lays out the broad strategies on the responses as it touches on business continuity plan, employee well-being and safety, responses to government advisories etc. The team provides direction to regional and local offices in terms of global framework that needs to be contextualised to the needs of the local culture and operations. The role of the corporate crisis management team is key for pandemic prevention and emergency response measures. The key focus of the team is as follows:

- Detecting the early signs of crisis.
- Identifying the problem areas, deciding on future course of action and devising strategies to help organisation come out of difficult times as soon as possible.
- Discussing with employees on the identified areas of concern and encouraging them to face problems with courage, determination and smile. Motivate them not to lose hope and deliver their best.
- Preparing crisis management plan which works best during emergency situations.
- Ensuring that all necessary measures are taken in order to ensure the health and well-being of employees as well as business continuity, with a focus on customers and suppliers, to the highest degree possible.
- Helping the organisation come out of tough times and also prepare it for the future.

Source: <https://www.managementstudyguide.com/crisis-management-team.htm>

Pre-Pandemic: Establishment of Corporate Crisis Management Team

Question: What are the desired outcomes of corporate crisis management team?

The desired outcome would vary depending on the impact the crisis has on the business, we have listed some common desired outcomes below as reference:

- Proactive approach to raise and tackle emerging challenges to avoid time-pressure and provide meaningful, consistent management guidance to employees.
- Effective monitoring of evolving national / regional government guidance on quarantine measures etc.
- Timely proposal and execution of processes, response and communication plans. These are supported by documents to provide information, guidance, templates or blueprints for specific preparation on a local level. e.g. preparation made in advance for remote working from technical and behavioral perspective, PPE purchase and distribution.
- Well thought through decisions that are balanced to achieve business and people objectives.
- Timely decision on future course of action and devise strategies to help organisation come out of difficult times as soon as possible.
- Sound management on budgets and financial investment during crisis.

Refer to [Annex 1 – Crisis readiness questionnaire](#) to ensure that the organization is ready for crisis management preparedness.

Question: Who should be in the corporate crisis management team?

The corporate crisis management team should include:

- Chief executive officer
- Head of departments (C-suite officers)
- Media Advisors / Corporate Communications Representatives
- Human Resource Representatives
- Union Representatives (in some cases)

This crisis management team structure may also be replicated in a smaller scale at the local level to coordinate and ensure effective implementation of global and local advisories.

Depending on the size of your organisation, an individual could be playing multiple roles. The following are the basic functions that need to be taken care of to make sure that your crisis team is effective.

Leader (Typically Country Leader)

Manages the team, provides for the safety and well-being of employees, and facilitates the timely resumption of business operations to minimise the impact of the emergency on customers and shareholders. The leader has the final authority and may be required to make a decision quickly and with limited information.

Finance & Administration

Manages the organisation's financial stability. Understands the impact of the crisis on finance and accounting matters, including business process issues and regulatory compliance and reporting. This role will also be required to keep track of all spending and government subsidy (if any) during the period.

Human Resource

Responsible for the development and implementation of programs / measures designed to support employees during and after the event. Also involved (in coordination with other departments such as Communications) in keeping employees informed about relevant aspects of the crisis.

Facility and Logistics Support)

Manages the organisation's facilities consideration ensuring buildings are safe and accessible and whether it is necessary to move employees to other facilities. As part of the logistics support, the role may also be looking at how to obtain food and transportation, line up hotel rooms, keep everything moving, and make sure nothing is missed.

Pre-Pandemic: Establishment of Corporate Crisis Management Team



Reference: <https://www.mha-it.com/2018/05/09/crisis-management-team-roles/>



SME

Small and Medium Enterprise

An individual may play 2 to 3 roles relating to their scope of responsibilities. E.g. a HR professional may undertake HR, legal, Risk, Security, and Compliance. Take the above as reference and put in place a structure that resonates with your organisation structure.



MNC

Multinational Corporation

There may be an established crisis / response team framework and reporting requirements for larger organisations. Before setting one up, it is best to check and tailor accordingly if need to.

Question: When do you put the corporate crisis management team together?

The team should convene as early as possible to determine the direction that the organisation will take and make critical decisions throughout the period. This is regardless of the pandemic reaching the geography that the organisation is in. This proactive approach will allow time for the company to organise the right resources and map out response plan readily for deployment when the situation arise. With this, the business will be able to respond efficiently as well as effectively, ensuring all relevant decision-makers (legal representatives) across all business sectors in the country are engaged. If not already done so, it is good to consider including in the job profiles of the different business heads their role required in a corporate crisis management team. This will enable you to activate the team swiftly in the event of a crisis to discuss business sustainability and emergency measures.

PRE-PANDEMIC

Pre-Pandemic: Establishment of Corporate Crisis Management Team

Question: What are the key success factors for setting up the Corporate Crisis Management Team?

Top Management Involvement – It is critical that the Country Head lead steer the company's efforts to mitigate the situation at country level. Ensuring that the Country Head and Country Management Team is part of the decision-making process is critical to drive alignment in the approach.

Communication – The Country Head should be aware of all internal communication that are shared with staff and should be the owner of such information broadcast to signify the importance of the message. This will ensure compliance and buy in especially when advisories are cascaded down. Management should also regularly engage teams and employees via regular communication, video calls, video messages and other applicable channels.

Ownership and Role Clarity – To drive better ownership and responsibility, ensure there is clarity on each members' responsibilities and how cross function collaboration needs to be coordinated. A sample of the role description of the Country Head role in the crisis management team:

Role of the Country Head:

1. Establish the country leadership as the country crisis management team representing businesses and functions to the extent required.
2. Act as a single point of contact for all businesses to the external world, especially government authorities.
3. Ensure country specific measures as issued by the government and/or local authorities are adhered to and implemented.
4. Establish a country and/or location specific approach that ensures implementation of group decisions and requests as communicated by the Corporate Crisis Management Team and/or specific work streams established at group level, across all sectors and functions. The latter refers particularly to all measures related to the workforce.
5. Ensure implementation of all measures related to business continuity that will generally be defined by the respective businesses. Business specific approaches are defined and steered for implementation.
6. The Country Head is authorised and empowered by virtue of the appointment to take the necessary measures at country level to mitigate the situation for the company as a whole, with the understanding that country leadership members are important partners for the country head to make things happen.

Key Stakeholder Analysis and Action Plans – Ensure all stakeholder groups are identified with the relevant risk and opportunity assessment. Follow development of the situation, monitor news and regulatory requirements and changes. Identify and differentiate the ongoing trends and impact to all stakeholder groups.

Constant Review and Agility – Given that the situation is fluid, to ensure that the business is on top of the situation, do put in place regular reviews. There needs to be agility in the action plans so that the organization can respond promptly to the changing situation.

Consider Impact of Decisions – Similar to ensuring that all stakeholder groups are considered, it is critical to ensure that no decisions are knee-jerked. The long-term perspective needs to be considered so that there is business continuity and sustainability.

Refer to [Annex 2 – Corporate Crisis Management Team Checklist](#) to guide you through the Corporate Crisis Management Team setup.

PRE-PANDEMIC

Pre-Pandemic: Establishment of Corporate Crisis Management Team

Question: How are decisions made if I have regional presence?

Whilst the pandemic situation may be a global event, measures and actions taken by the various regions may differ. At a corporate level, recommendations and broad guidelines should be extended for alignment as far as possible. The global or regional team can help map out recommended processes and assist in procurement of common PPE items. The guided framework will assist the local teams to assimilate and respond quickly without the need to reinvent the wheel. This is especially helpful as different countries will transit from phase to phase at different times. The sharing of experiences and adaption processed to navigate the situation will be helpful for all countries.

However, decisions are to be taken with the following considerations in mind:

- Stage of pandemic that the country is in
- Government legislations impacting the situation and business
- Country culture and norms
- Local stakeholders' expectations and requirements

Countries should take ownership and responsibility for handling the pandemic situation at a local level.

SME

Small and Medium Enterprise

It is common for the Corporate Crisis Management Team to gather feedback and input from employees to assess impact of changes to employees and the business before making a decision. This enables greater ownership and responsibility within the company to be agile and to adjust action steps where needed.

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Corporate governance could be stronger in an MNC environment, where decisions could be made by a global head not sitting in the same country. In the event that there is no leeway to allow local decision making due to this governance, delegations of authority from primary decision-makers to execute timely decisions, in the event primary decision-makers are not available, can be considered.

Pre-Pandemic: Setup Communication Channels & Stakeholder Evaluation

As companies manage through the COVID pandemic, it is important to ensure that key stakeholder groups are informed and aligned with the business decisions and changes. Reliable, transparent, and timely communication is key in today's environment as it reduces uncertainty. Internal and external stakeholders may have different points of interest and how the organisation engages these stakeholders tells them what it should be doing to make things right. Mixed messaging can be very damaging to an organisation - therefore like the establishment of a crisis management team, we recommend organisations to set up clear communication channels and start working within a communication cadence, which engages the stakeholders appropriately.

Question: What type of communication is required?

Businesses must consider both internal and external stakeholder groups identified in the risk and opportunity analysis when devising their communication plans. With good understanding of the stakeholders' needs, communication plans can be better formulated to manage the relationship throughout the pandemic. Depending on the business, the stakeholders may vary and below is an example of a stakeholder analysis that you may adopt as a reference.

PRE-PANDEMIC

Pre-Pandemic: Setup Communication Channels & Stakeholder Evaluation

Key Stakeholder Group

Internal Stakeholders

	Employees	Trade Union	CEO / Business Leaders	Line Mangers / Supervisors	Service Units / Supporting Functions Example Finance, Facilities, Internal Comms, Health and Safety, legal etc
Points of Interest	What will be the new work arrangement?	If the organization has cost cutting measures, how can we mitigate the impact on employees?	What are some business continuity planning considerations?	How should I engage my team virtually?	What are the government regulatory requirements for workspace?
Examples	Is my job still secure?			How to manage productivity and performance?	How can we cut cost / improve cash flow?

External Stakeholders

	Customers	Suppliers	Government / Regulatory bodies	Media	Shareholders	Community
Points of Interest	Will there be any disruption of service?	Will there be any challenges to deliver the goods / services?	Is the organization aligned to regulatory requirements?	How is the Company navigating the crisis?	What is the company's ability to rebound from the crisis?	How does the organization support the community?
Examples						

Question: What employee communication strategies do I have to plan for?

In times of crisis, companies need to be mindful of reputational branding as it is seen that companies that focus on purpose and clarity on re-building for the future, emerge and build a more resilient workforce. There is avenue to build the employer brand, setting the company apart from the competition. Sound crisis change communications strategy to navigate this is key for employee engagement and mobilisation, and will help to turn the challenging situation into an opportunity. Employee communication strategies need to be put in place in advance.

There are many consideration points in the organisation's communication strategy. It is the "glue" that connects all relevant stakeholders, ensuring that they continue the relationship with confidence and trust. With better alignment through greater awareness and understanding, there will be better support to achieve what is set out to be. There are many resources on communication tips, covering topics on what to communicate, how to communicate, and considerations for effective communication. Discover more resources in [Reference](#) to explore how to get the right message across effectively.



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The Company may have made a global company stance on work arrangements and when local government makes announcement on the news to implement changes in work arrangements that are not aligned, employees will often be confused by which to follow. We recommend HR working in MNC to stay abreast of these updates locally and issue communication to clarify as soon as practically possible

Question: What communication channels should we put in place?

It is crucial to disseminate consistent, accurate and timely information via dedicated communication channels and spokesperson. A practical way to do this is to establish a cross-functional response and communication team that is supported by sub teams to manage different stakeholder group. Creating clear roles and establishing responsibility outlines what needs to be communicated, to whom and by what means.

Simply put, the best communication channels are the ones that help you deliver the right message to the right audience at the right time. With COVID, the preferred means is through digital communication channel, but it really depends on what are the existing channels that works for your organisation. For the purpose of this playbook, we will look at some recommended digital communication channels for employees.

PRE-PANDEMIC

Pre-Pandemic: Setup Communication Channels & Stakeholder Evaluation

Level 3 – Point of Escalation

Share the points of contacts to reach out to members of the Corporate Crisis Management Team / Communication stream leads in case of escalations (e.g. customers' requests, feedback, requirements).

Level 2 – Dedicated Hotlines

For information that cannot be found in level 1 and case by case advisory required

Level 1 – Digital Channels

Examples:

- Intranet
- Emails
- Employee Newsletters
- Collaboration tools
- Hybrid Messaging
- Video conferencing software
- Private messaging software
- Document sharing software
- Internal company blogs
- Internal social media

Sometimes, the message may need to be communicated over a variety of channels to achieve common understanding. Explore the most effective way to reach your employees and tap on all available channels. Do not be afraid to ask for feedback and recalibrate when required.

Through the Pandemic, we have seen that consistent messages shared across the different communication channels helped to ensure reach and retention of messages. Nonetheless, regular verbal communication is still key to ensure that we continue to engage with our teams, and this is more effective than written communications.

Question: How can HR ensure sharing of credible and timely information and resources?

In this digital age, there would unfortunately bound to be misinformation about the pandemic and responsible employers should ensure that only information from credible source are communicated to employees. Employees have high expectations on the business to act and employers and government are expected to team up in providing reliable and timely information is in times of a pandemic.

These can include the WHO website, government health advisories and credible international news organizations. HR can provide updates to employees on a regular basis with links to such credible resources.

Case Study of an SME

A software development SME deploys the following channels to communicate to the different stakeholders:

For employees

- Microsoft Teams or Zoom for its weekly meetings to share verbal updates and instructions
- Email communication to disseminate important and official instructions
- WhatsApp to share alerts

For external stakeholders

- Company e-newsletter
- Social Media

PRE-PANDEMIC

Pre-Pandemic: Emergency Scenarios Planning

Question: What are the different possible emergency scenarios that HR would need to plan for?

During the pre-pandemic stage, a scenario planning approach should be considered. The following are some scenarios that could occur:

- Scenario 1 - There are one or more confirmed infections in the country or city
- Scenario 2 - There are one or more confirmed infection among employees, contractors, or suppliers
- Scenario 3 - There are numerous cases in country or city where the city's infrastructure comes to a standstill

Having a ready to implement plan for these scenarios will enable organisations to better respond to these situations should they occur.

Question: What Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) can I put in place in the event of confirmed or suspected cases at the Workplace?

It is important for a SOP document to be in place and such document should be aligned to local regulatory requirements and shared with all members of the crisis management team. The URL below provides a sample SOP which you can adopt for your organisation.

<https://www.ihrp.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Sample-SOP-for-confirmed-or-suspected-cases-at-workplace-Flowchart-1.pdf>

MNC

Multinational Corporation

There may be different processes or reporting requirements to observe when managing a confirmed / suspect case in an MNC environment. HR practitioners should understand these requirements beforehand and ensure that SOP incorporate both country and company requirements.

Question: How can I plan ahead to prepare for emergency scenarios?

Refer to [Annex 3 – Emergency Scenario Planning Checklist](#)

These checklists are useful during a pandemic itself and can be utilised to help you plan. Ahead of a crisis, review the checklist below and identify the potential risk to your business and how you can mitigate any risks from a HR perspective.

For example

- Do you know who are the key staff or contractors who will have a major impact on your operations if they were to fall ill? It is important to assess this early on and create a succession plan for these roles. This might also involve reviewing handover policies and system/process training that can be done remotely.
- Do your employees need to work with customers face to face? Can this be converted to online meetings? Do they have the skillsets to bring their tasks online? Are there any trainings that they can attend?
- From an IT perspective, if there is a need to work remotely, are all your employees well equipped to work from home? Will there be any company support for any equipment that is required by employees to telecommute?
- Have you reviewed your insurance policies to see the impact on them if any of your employees were to be hit by the virus?
- Are processes, information and resources digitized?

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Stakeholder Evaluation and Management

HR plays a vital role in collaborating with stakeholders to support the business in managing a pandemic. In the pre-pandemic section of this playbook, we have established some key stakeholder groups that HR should be collaborating with. In this section, we will dive in to look at how HR can better engage with some of these stakeholders during a pandemic.

Question: How can HR support business leaders?

HR should collaborate with business leaders in times of a pandemic to ensure business continuity and sustainability and aim to ensure the realisation of the company's goals.

While achieving this, steps must be taken to minimize risk of transmission due to work exposure in times of a pandemic. The below checklist can be used as a guide:

- Establish a country crisis management team
- Set up work streams: Business representatives, EHS & Medical, Communications, People, Corporate Affairs, Procurement
- Put employee communication strategy and plan in place
- Establish a hotline and make local Q&As available (as needed)
- Put employee information in place for employee guidance on expected behaviors and measures (e.g. meetings)
- Put local policies and processes in place and execute them
- Set up hygiene measures, visitor questionnaire, management approval for exceptions
- Secure country leadership support and living guidance (role model)
- Create alignment with external stakeholders as needed (e.g. authorities, associations, customers)
- Monitor national/regional news, government guidance and peer actions
- Establish reporting to Corporate Crisis Management Team (Country report template)
- Establish alignment with corporate business representatives for corporate business continuity management

Question: What is HR's role in supporting business leaders with cost management?

In times of a Pandemic, HR needs to prepare for disruptions to business and the workforce. For organisations that foresee financial impacts to the business, the need to implement cost cutting measures could be accelerated. Such adjustments to the workforce could take many forms, such as:

- A hiring freeze
- A pause in contractor/temporary staffing resources
- Withdrawing offers of employment to candidates or delaying start dates
- Reducing agency/temporary work
- Delaying or freezing salary increases
- Reducing non-cash benefits
- Retraining/redeploying staff to unaffected or less affected areas of the business
- Offering employees sabbaticals
- Asking employees to take unpaid leave
- Layoffs

Before implementing any cost cutting measures, business leaders should be advised to consider any government support available. Thereafter, a holistic view should be adopted to determine viability and potential impact of the company's decision. Instead of just looking at cost cutting measures, explore possibilities to expand revenue streams, build brand value and take time to reskill your workforce. Laying off of employees should be taken as a last resort and the process should be handled with care and sensitivity.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Stakeholder Evaluation and Management



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We have observed that during this pandemic, some countries introduced control measure that could limit an employer's ability to implement cost-cutting measures shared above. If you are a HR practitioner with cross-country responsibility, it is important to be aware of these limitations before executing. For example, in Singapore, if the cost-saving measures appeared to be "excessive", the government would intervene to further assess if the measures were fair and reasonable.

Question: How can HR partner with business leaders and finance to support the cash flow of the business?

Managing the cash flow carefully will be an existential issue for many businesses, and since HR costs are the single largest expense, HR can work with Finance to find ways to reduce cost and project new cost items. Cost savings could be channeled towards supplying employees with face masks or care packs. Some suggested cost savings measure could be:

- **Travel & Entertainment:** Social distancing measures – restricting business travel, eliminating air travel, etc. – have the collateral effect of conserving cash in the short-run.
- **Salary Freeze:** Considering a salary freeze for the duration of the efforts will be much more palatable if it's communicated in advance with clarity, authenticity and the commitment of being "temporary" is followed through upon. If salary reviews are done at a common review date, this becomes easier to communicate and deliver on, as that date is pushed back for everyone, as necessary.
- **Planning for significant earnings "hit"** should also consider the consequences to profit sharing and incentive programs that are tie to corporate performance. While it's not necessary to broadcast the impact until it's known, equipping HR business partners and senior managers with thoughtful, honest responses to the inevitable questions will be very important.
- **Workday Reductions and Pay Cuts:** Hourly workers may need to be asked to work reduced shifts to conserve cash and avoid layoffs. Given the parallel likelihood of there being less work to do, this may be the best way to preserve the workforce and spread the pain equitably. Salaried staff should not be exempted, and it may be necessary to institute a pay cut – basically revaluing the job – until economic conditions associated with the pandemic improve.
- **Outright Layoffs:** They are a last resort, but layoffs might be inevitable. From the company's perspective, the most important thing is to make these difficult decisions in the best long-term interests of the organization, even though these activities hurt most to the employees in the short-run cycle of the pandemic. While cutting those activities might look like the obvious choice today, when that pent-up demand comes roaring back, it's important that the company has the talent capacity to respond. Mass layoffs are a delicate exercise. They need to be carefully planned and staffed by well-trained, empathic and patient HR people. The Communications team needs to be fully briefed, as well as other constituencies like government and partners.

Question: What are the types of government grants available and what are some key considerations?

Different countries have a different approach to government support programs and there is a mixture of financial incentives, subsidies, rebates and/or tax concessions. Refer to additional reference links for government subsidy programs for a list of resource consolidating the different government grants available during the COVID pandemic. We see potential benefits and opportunities that these various support programs may be able to offer to businesses. However, if you are looking at implementing changes to working arrangements in order to take advantage of any such schemes (for example, standing down employees in South Korea) further advice and input from Legal should be considered.

In addition, there may be reputational factors to consider. Given these programs typically draw on 'taxpayers' money; we need to be mindful of market/public perception.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Stakeholder Evaluation and Management

Case Study

Be mindful of Public Perception

The potential brand impact warrants careful consideration and coordination of how we approach any government support programs. For example, [Victoria Beckham Ltd was slammed](#) for furloughing staff and tapping on the British government's Job Retention Scheme instead of paying out of their own pocket. Separately, [Burger chain Shake Shack received good publicity](#) for returning \$10 million in government loan that could be used to benefit independent restaurants who need it most but have not gotten any assistance.

Where the business is eligible, we may want to invest further in evaluating the cost/benefit as some programs come with strings attached that may outweigh the initial benefits. For example, in Hong Kong, it is proposed that if an employer receives the Employment Support Scheme subsidy, they must undertake to not make any redundancies during the period where the subsidy is payable.

Below are some recommended considerations when tapping on any government schemes:

- What are the eligibility criteria for the government assistance?
- How long will any subsidies be in place for?
- What does the person who receives the subsidy need to do with the subsidy?
- Are there any specific caps or other limitations of the scheme?
- What does the person who receives the subsidy need to do if they are eligible – how do they apply, who do they apply to?
- Are there any sanctions for non-compliance with the terms of these schemes?
- Is there any specific mechanism for disputes to be resolved?
- Does the scheme provide any additional flexibilities for employers or any specific employee related protections?



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HR practitioners may need to factor in how to take up government support program that can sometimes be a complex process. In some countries, there is no need to apply for the assistance but in others, there could be an administratively heavy process. We might question the payoff on the admin / time / outsource vendor fees to be invested against the actual benefit.

Question: How can HR support leadership & engagement in COVID-19 crisis?

HR can support leadership team by engaging them in the current situation and ensuring they know the 'How to' in some of these ways:

- How to lead in engaging ways virtually
- How to stay sane and productive
- How to stay connected with each other and the company

By providing curated, structured and easy-to-find content in these aspects, leaders will be in a better position to take care of the well-being of their team and support their work from home experience. Such resources should also take into considerations employees that are still required to work on site / in office, which would require different form of support.

To be able to curate the right content for these resources, HR should take reference from pulse surveys as the needs of employees vary depending on the organisation.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Stakeholder Evaluation and Management

Some tips on how to run a Covid-19 related pulse survey:

- Employees get invited to the survey
- Questions cover current challenges and needs of employees
- Mood check / engagement level
- Quality / quantity / relevance of current communication
- Barriers to productivity/resources and support
- Collaboration and contact with the team
- Leadership support
- Learnings to share
- Managers view results in a dashboard

Question: How can HR better support employees to work from home?

It is important to conduct a review of the processes, information or resources to identify those that anchor employees to physical workplaces and ensure that they are fully digitised. Processes such as recruitment, onboarding and offboarding which are traditionally done face to face can be digitised by enabling digital interviews, digital signatures for documents and utilising courier services to collect office equipment.

Suggested ways to digitise are to leverage on artificial intelligence as a first line of response for employee questions (e.g., chatbots).

To support employees to work from home, HR can consider the following:

- Check in with employees on the facilities and equipment they need to work from home
- Encourage flexibility of working hours to support employees who need time off to manage the needs of their children or elderly parents
- Provide a handbook on best practices to work from home and maintain personal productivity (i.e. how to set up workspace at home)
- Foster connections with virtual get togethers
- Strengthen company values and culture
- Conduct regular check ins or pulse surveys with employees to see how they are coping
- Invite employees to share their needs

Question: Why should HR partner with business leaders across the world to solve the challenges together?

During these times of uncertainty, business leaders across industries have been eager to share their experiences and learn from each other in both the HR function and in other roles. The private sector is also keen to collaborate with the public sector, particularly for small businesses that will be impacted significantly. These connections and shared crisis preparations may prove to be one of the best possible solutions for keeping employees safe and allow businesses to continue to operate. In times like these, organisations need authentic leaders who can empathise yet make tough decisions. Engaging the whole of the business and asking employees for ideas not only can help them respond to the crisis in more innovative and effective ways it can also deliver a positive cultural shift along the way as an unintended consequence of the tough days the world is going through.

During Pandemic: Stakeholder Evaluation and Management

Question: What are the different approaches to communication?

In the pre-pandemic section of this playbook, we looked at the type of communication required for internal / external stakeholders, in this section, we will dive in to give some practical examples of what type of communication content could be relevant during a pandemic. Communication needs to cover both proactive and reactive statements and can be considered in the following areas:

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Communication Execution

Internal Communication

Employees

- Create a platform to allow leaders to give pandemic updates and explain internal organisation guidelines (e.g. cessation of business travel)
- Situation update and Business performance
- Directives and policies (share the What and Why)
- Escalation channels for approvals and enquires
- Knowledge Management - Establish Frequently Asked Questions (refer to for [Annex 4](#) sample of FAQ, prepare relevant response to the questions)
- Hotlines / Point of Contacts / Escalation points to answer employee's questions
- Internal communication in the event of confirmed case

CEO / Business Leaders

- Updates on legislative requirements and its impact on the business and operations (e.g. work from home requirements)
- Business analysis and discussion
- Cross functions collaboration (what, how, review)
- Strategic and tactical plans discussion
- Sharing of employees' feedback and ground sentiments
- Proactive sharing of HR practices and relevant adaption in line with business response

Line Managers/Supervisors

- Situation analysis and update
- Impact to business
- Business response and associated directives and policies (what and why)
- Support needed to business (e.g. downward communication)
- Upward communication to the top on ground feedback and concerns
- Share how and where to get accurate and reliable information

External Communication

Government

- Reactive statements in the event of confirmed case
- Sharing of internal processes / records as required by the legislation

Media

- Reactive statements in the event of confirmed case .
- Proactive sharing on the company's response to pandemic situation for employer branding

Customers

- Reactive statements in the event of confirmed case Regular update to major customers to create sense of security to continue business.
- Proactive updates if there are any change in products / service offerings

Suppliers / vendors

- Reactive statements in the event of confirmed case.
- Business requirements for compliance from suppliers and vendors

We recommend referencing the key stakeholder group and the fit for purpose to best develop your organisation's communication plan. Depending on the touch point and frequency required, you can then plan the communication platform / channel. Refer to [Annex 5](#) for simple communication templates

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Communication Execution



SME

Small and Medium Enterprise

In an SME, especially smaller SMEs, such crisis communication may have less processes or layers. Having open sharing and discussions would be effective and efficient for the business leader to share updates and everyone to share concerns or provide feedback

Question: How frequently should we communicate?

A pandemic situation may evolve rapidly which can impact organisations. Regular communication provides clarity to the employees, instilling a sense of security so that morale and engagement can be kept high. It is important to time all messages (both proactive and reactive statement) in order to get the best mileage from the communication plans. Frequency of communication can be considered with reference to the message that needs to be sent.

For reactive statements that are made in response to change in business climate or government legislation, the message needs to be immediate (within next business day) e.g. travel advisory in response to Government statements. Should there be no change in the directives or situation, status updates and general awareness information can be provided from time to time. This will be beneficial as various stakeholder groups are constantly engaged and assured.

For proactive statements such as educational, awareness information or information impacting change in business decisions and strategies, communication needs to be made before the situation changes. To keep employees informed, a weekly update at minimum to employees is recommended. These updates could cover information received from government authorities (such as The Labour Office or Trade Office) on critical infrastructure situation, International and local health authorities' advice, travel advisories or to inform any decisions that impact employees and the business.

Consider the organisation's agility especially when communicating process / operating changes to determine the notice required. For a process that can be adapted quickly, a day's turnaround may be enough. If the impacted process takes a longer time to be in effect, the lead time need to be factored in.

Question: What should be our communication approach to a confirmed case?

Employees of today want clarity on everything - from how many colleagues have contracted the virus to how the virus is affecting the organisation's ability to operate. In the event an employee is confirmed to have contracted the virus, we recommend that all companies have in place a communication plan to inform employees, even in jurisdiction that have no legal requirement to do so. Here are three key components required in your communication:

- Notify all employees who work in the location or area where the employee works of the situation without revealing any confidential medical information such as the name of the employee.
- Inform employees of the actions you have taken, including requiring employees who worked closely to the infected worker to go home.
- Let employees know about your sanitising and cleaning efforts and remind them to seek medical attention if they exhibit symptoms.

Please refer to [Annex 5- Communication Templates](#) for a sample of announcement template for a confirmed case.

DURING PANDEMIC

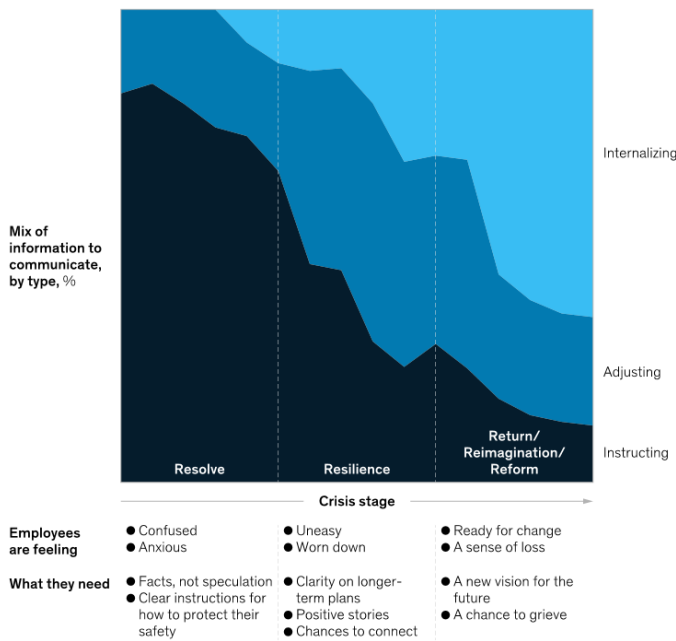
During Pandemic: Communication Execution

Question: Is there a need to review communication topics and frequency over the various phases?

The frequency and type of communication will need to be adjusted during the different phases of the pandemic. At the onset, communication needs to be more frequent and intense. This is when there are a lot of ambiguity and the organisation needs to provide clarity and direction. Frequency can be reduced when the pandemic situation stabilises. The type of messages will also change in accordance with the needs of our stakeholder groups. For instance, for employee communication, consider the employees' emotions and areas of concerns. Messages can be targeted to build assurance, confidence and trust in the organisation's plans.

Adjust your communication mix by your current crisis stage.

Crisis communication life cycle, illustrative



<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/a-leaders-guide-communicating-with-teams-stakeholders-and-communities-during-covid-19#>

Question: What other key considerations to note during employee communication?

Besides considering the possible communication channels, other considerations include: -

- **What language should be used?**

Although English may be a common language used in organisations, do consider if your employees are adequately fluent in the language. Check understanding of the message and do not hesitate to communicate in other languages for better understanding of the message. In some geographies where there is large concentration of more shop floor type employees, there may be a need to do another major translation of all the communication materials.

- **Is there any way the message can be simplified?**

Write in a direct manner so that the message is easy to understand. In situations where there are too many written statements, explore if graphics can be included in the announcements.

- **How to ensure message retention?**

A simple message is easier to be retained. In addition, put up posters in prominent places such as lift landing areas, laptop popup screen to remind employees of key important messages. Repeat the messages across various channels if needed.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Communication Execution

Question: Is the focus mainly on providing directives and situation updates?

To come out on the right side of the situation, organisations have to look beyond just managing the situation well. There are opportunities to better engage the various stakeholder groups. In employee communication for instance, review how communication strategies can be tapped to increase camaraderie, engagement and motivation. Do not focus solely on providing directives, take a step ahead and explore how there could be enhanced positive reinforcement. Celebrate success jointly with the organisation, share the achievements and shine on exemplary stories! As more and more of the workforce now look at fulfilling a larger purpose, stories on how the organisation has helped the wider community will also be beneficial. Such sharing will help drive a sense of pride and purpose amongst the employees, keeping engagement high.

Question: How to communicate for change management?

As the pandemic crisis may impact people practices, HR needs to consider the element of change management in the communication plan. This is especially important in situations where employees' benefits or incentives are impacted. To manage such challenging topics, do not hide or sugar coat. Instead, explain the situation faced, considerations made by the organisation, rationale of the decisions and importantly the "What's in it for me" message. For instance, if the decision to utilise all annual leave will avoid job cuts, share it with the employees. We would also need to be sensitive about the message, be compassionate and consider the best way the message can be sent across. As it is natural to fear and resist change, it is good to foresee possible pushbacks and proactively communicate responses to those areas of concerns.

Question: What are the key success factors to drive successful communication?

Top Management Involvement

As communication is closely tied to the business decisions and key messages, do engage the top management when devising communication plans. This is to ensure accuracy of message as well as obtain support if queries arise after the communication is sent out.

Stakeholders e.g. other people managers are as important as the top management during communication. They are often the middle layer who will interact closely with the ground employees and hence it is critical that this group is involved in the communication plans. Share draft of important communication to the people managers and see if there are any business or people concerns.

Stakeholder Engagement

Appoint Person / Team Responsible

Typically the Communications Manager or team will take responsibility to ensure that the message is aligned to business required template and language. If this has not been assigned, look at appointing someone to have an overview of this portfolio and ensure all relevant templates are in order. This will enable swift response when the need arises. All customers and media queries will also be directed to the Communications team. For employee communication, it is imperative to ensure that HR is involved right from planning to execution.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Communication Execution

Consider the various stakeholder groups and determine the best communication mode. This include ensuring deployment of messages via a variety of channels. Do not restrict yourself to only 1 platform, look at the desired outcome and tailor your communication plan. Consider other communication mediums such as daily team briefs, WhatsApp, employee communication application, TV media in facilities, virtual meetings with management team. The message / language may also be customised in order to drive the message across and factor in consideration for cultural sensitivity.

Communication Mode

Communication principles

During a sensitive time like a pandemic crisis, it is important the communication remains true to continue the trust between company and employees. Ensure that the message is consistent, reliable and timely. Explain and explain, times are tough, and employees would understand and support the directives better if the rationale behinds decisions are shared. Be sensitive about the message to be sent and be as supportive to the employees as possible. Always keep the message simple and clear to avoid miscommunication.

To support 2-way communication, review how feedback and queries can be answered. If a culture whereby queries are preferred to be raised anonymously, consider setting up communication platforms that facilitates e.g. "Slido". .

Platform for 2-way communication

Recalibrate

Take the initiative to reach out to the employees to check for understanding. Listen actively to determine if the message is received correctly by the employees. Is the frequency right or is there a need to ensure more regular information is shared? Recalibrate the communication plans based on the review of feedback received.

Refer to checklist in [Annex 5 – communication templates](#) for some consideration points that you can take note when devising your communication strategies.

Question: What should be our communication approach to pandemic-related fatality?

HR leaders must guide / coach managers to empathetically communicate with and support employees during the pandemic, and even more so in the event of the death of a colleague.

The grief, stress and fear surrounding the infection may increase following a colleague's death. HR must consider restrictions imposed by social distancing and encourage managers to find ways to remain present for employees (example tele or video conference). We recommend a direct communication from manager to affected colleagues / team followed by an email to the wider Company. EAP services should also be made available for the direct team members.

Please refer to [SHRM forms](#) page for a sample of announcement template for death of an employee and align accordingly with local HR, Legal, and the respective country management.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Communication Execution



SME

Small and Medium Enterprise

Given that the team within SMEs are smaller, it is even more important that business owners and managers speak with their employees and allow for a grieving process where employees share their thoughts and emotions. Managers are encouraged to check in with employees on a regular basis (i.e. weekly) on how they are coping. The SME may like to bring in a grief counsellor or refer employees who are feeling overwhelmed to national counseling hotlines.



MNC

Multinational Corporation

These communications should be tweaked depending on the geographical location, as cultural components play an important role and need to be taken into consideration.

Question: What can an employer do if an employee acts in breach of a quarantine orders / stay home notice or the employer's business continuity plan?

Being business compliant with the legislation is important as any contravene of legislation may lead to business closure, brand reputation and loss of customers / sales. It is thus important that an employer does its part to ensure compliance from its employees. All non-compliance should be dealt with seriously, as it endangers the health and safety of other employees.

In Singapore, under section 14 of the Employment Act, an employer may after due inquiry dismiss an employee without notice for misconduct that is inconsistent with the fulfilment of the express or implied conditions of their service.

Such conditions of service would generally include the expectation that an employee will adhere to lawful instructions, including any reasonable instructions set out in the employer's business continuity plan (BCP). Similarly, it would follow that movement and restrictions imposed by the authorities should not be disregarded by the employee.

Given the severity of consequences arising from their breach, it could be well within an employer's rights to dismiss an employee for cause on such grounds, noting however the requirement that due inquiry must still be made.

During Pandemic: Basic Response Measures

Question: What are some immediate steps that HR must take to implement safe management measures?

It is important to:

- Track sick employees
- Track compliance and implement disciplinary measures for employees who abuse sick leave or time off
- Conduct cross-training employees
- Establish and publish hygiene "best practices" to prevent the spread of disease (cough etiquette, proper hand washing)
- Establish social distancing guidelines (separate desks, closed conference rooms and cafeterias, online conferencing, etc.)
- Establish guidelines for increased facilities cleaning and contaminated waste disposal

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Basic Response Measures

Question: How can HR support business continuity planning?

As companies navigate the ongoing pandemic, there are several key issues corporate leaders should be thinking about. Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the employees in the workplace is essential, depending on the sector, companies will need to reorganise teams and reallocate resources identifying priorities and processes that needs to be kept going. HR practitioners should work with corporate leaders to develop a business continuity plan and it should be communicated clearly to employees. Refer to [Annex 6 - Business Continuity Planning Checklist](#).

Question: How can HR support the business to be compliant?

HR may have to play the role of compliance or to work closely with compliance officer. All violations against internal Covid-19 policies and measures need to be taken seriously. To encourage compliance, HR can

- Communicate the severity of non-compliance
- Tie the desired behaviors with performance measurements
- Run internal communication campaigns on the right behaviors
- Give warnings for non-compliant behavior

Examples of non-compliant behavior

- Personal Protective Equipment is neither provided nor worn inappropriately, e.g. masks cover the mouth only
- Social Distancing of 1m is not maintained at premises.
- Employees that come to the office without clearance from the Safety / Compliance officer when they can work remotely
- Infected people at the site - Missing precautions after positive tested employees or external partners who have entered the site, e.g. cleaning of the entered rooms, quarantine for employees who have had contact with, lack of communication, etc.
- Visitors & External Suppliers continue to enter the site for non-essential work and / or it is not ensured that they comply with the internal hygiene protocol.

Question: What can HR do to support workplace prevention measures?

Face to Face Meetings

As a rule, companies should opt to use technology to hold meetings rather than hold face-to-face meetings. Should face-to-face meeting be deemed necessary, participants should be reduced to a minimum with only the decision-maker present or to fulfill the legal requirement. Participants should maintain distance from each other, 1-2 meter to reduce the chance of airborne infections. Meeting guidelines for such necessary meetings should be reminded as:

- Stay Focused: Reduce duration of meeting to a minimum and ventilate rooms.
- Hygiene: No handshake but regular handwashing! No open coughing or sneezing.

Events/Mass Gatherings

Even if employee-attended events are local and don't require travel, any close-in congregation of people is a potential transmission vector, and participation should be carefully considered. The size, format and location of the event are all legitimate considerations.

Promote General hygiene

1. No handshaking, no hugging.
2. Maintain distance from each other (1-2 meter).
3. Wash your hands with soap or sanitizer frequently for at least 20 sec.
4. Don't cough / sneeze into your hand but into your elbow and dispose of used tissues in the residual waste.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Basic Response Measures

General guidelines on meetings and events in risk countries

1. All face-to-face meetings and events in risk countries should be avoided during a pandemic.
2. Use Skype, Teams or WebEx as virtual alternatives. Our aim as HR is to keep the risk of infection for employees as low as possible.
3. Urgent face-to-face meetings (e.g. essential to maintain production and safety in plants or for legal, regulatory reasons) should be reduced to the actual number of participants / decision-makers required. These decision-makers are advised to communicate the results of the meeting to their colleagues afterwards. The duration of a meeting should also be limited to the necessary minimum.
4. Observe the general hygiene measures for urgent face-to-face meetings. These include, for example, refraining from direct contact when greeting (e.g. shaking hands), keeping one to two meters distance from colleagues, regularly airing and cleaning the meeting room and thoroughly washing hands before and after the meeting.
5. Any face-to-face meetings other than for decision-making (e.g. informative meetings, regular team and project update meetings, sports events, team events) are to be avoided.

Recommendations for working in an open office space

In addition, please observe the following rules for meetings and working in an open office space (15 or more employees):

1. In general, working in open office spaces is still possible in all risk countries. The respective decision to do so lies with the responsible manager. Criteria are, for example, whether the office space is used by teams that interact strongly with each other and move around the room or work separately on different activities.
2. Employees who can easily perform their tasks from home are asked to address their manager.
3. Please do not use enclosed phone and meeting booths with insufficient ventilation until further notice.
4. Please primarily use virtual tools like Skype, Teams or WebEx (see above) for meetings.

Question: What can HR do to support workplace prevention measures from a facilities perspective?

The mission of your Facilities Management team is to deliver a safe, comfortable, productive, and sustainable place for your employees to work. They would also be concerned with being fully integrated into your COVID-19 response planning. The collaboration of HR with the Facilities Managers and Employee Health & Safety managers will enable for a better consideration on how to protect the building site and keep its environment safe.

Here are some workplace prevention measures to consider for the facility:

- Light switches & elevator buttons
Sensitise everyone to the importance of the same behavior out of the office. Everyone should have (and use) hand sanitiser, disinfectant wipes and tissues whenever they have been in a public space.
- Power up the cleaning crews
Maintenance supervisors should review the cleaning products kit and confirm that sanitising products are central. Increase cleaning frequency and change cleaning protocols to include daily sanitizing wipe-downs of every surface. Protect workers with disposable nitrile gloves and encourage everyone to change them often to avoid cross-contamination.
- Signage and Sanitizer
Every conference room, rest room, shared workspace, cafeteria and break room should have both within sight and within easy reach.
- Desk Kits
Drive home the message with two kits on every desk – one for work and one for home – sanitizer, tissues, disposable wipes and a tip sheet.
- Doors
If touching the handle is unavoidable, use a tissue or paper towel. Communicate the change with signage and tip sheets and have supplies within reach of every doorway.

Refer to [Annex 7 Facilities Considerations checklist](#) for additional measures to consider.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Basic Response Measures

Question: How Can HR support social distancing behaviour?

For social distancing behavior to take place, employee engagement is needed.

Tips on what HR can do to support social distancing behaviour

- Watch out for your colleagues
- Identify leadership teams and critical functions and split in teams
- Encourage colleagues to take ownership of their space and their behaviors
- Introduce and enforce clear rules on social distancing and hygiene
- Review every work area and social space for opportunities
- Link to de-densification activities (split shifts and teams, segregate them either spatially or temporally)

For organisations with shift work or canteens, there should be no hand over at shifts or only with an absolute minimum number of participants. Refer to the following checklist to identify practices that you can implement in your organisation.

Shift scheduling and segregation

- Single shift
 - Stagger shift start time (e.g. warehouse starts at 7am, Production area A at 7:10, etc.).
 - Split the shift into A (mornings) & B (evenings) to reduce the number of people together.
 - Move to 8hrs x 7 days instead of 8hrs x 5 days to reduce the number of people on-site.
- Multi-Shift Operations
 - Reduce shifts by 30mins to provide a 45min - 1-hour gap (Pay for full shift)
 - Eliminate large groups meeting in locker rooms, clock in stations etc.
 - Allows social distancing between groups during handover
 - De-Densification of the site
 - Deep clean high traffic areas between shifts
 - Move to 8hrs x 7 days instead of 8hrs x 5 days to reduce the number of people on-site

Note: Critical processes may need full time monitoring and handover

Production, locker rooms

- Distance of 1-2 m
- Set up entry and exit flow and schedule in locker rooms (1 person out, 1 person in)
- Changing and use of locker room only for what is strictly needed on-site (e.g. take safety shoes home)
- Avoid return trips to locker rooms during shift
- Assign equipment to individual workers as much as possible or disinfect in between use by different people
- Establish cleaning stations in all work centers

Canteen Management (include break rooms etc.)

- De-densify, eliminate and mitigate exposure risk
 - Extend opening hours (e.g. longer lunch breaks)
 - Assign time slots for each department
 - Remove chairs / tables to ensure social distancing
 - Stagger breaks within shift groups
 - Hand-wash or Sanitiser before entry
 - Full time cleaners in the canteen / Additional canteen staff may be required to cope with extra tasks
 - Mark the tables with tape to highlight the gap
 - Zero self-service (coffee, water, bread baskets/cutlery)
 - Only boxed meals
- Use large conference rooms for BYO lunches (avoid canteen for specific areas)
- Equip with tables and chair for use as a break rooms (provide free food to encourage use)

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Basic Response Measures

HR can also work with supervisors and managers to support the behavior in the following ways:

- Supervisors and managers must display role model behavior
- Supervisors need to review work areas frequently and adapt if needed
- Supervisors need to enforce social distancing rules
- Supervisors to challenge their teams to create space (this is to deal with the initial response by employees that it is not possible to create space)

For some useful resources on Safe Distancing Measure

Refer to <https://www.humanresourcesonline.net/covid-19-how-employers-can-do-their-part-in-implementing-social-distancing-measures>

Refer to <https://www.gov.sg/article/safe-management-measures-required-at-the-workplace-after-the-circuit-breaker-period>

Question: What are some practices that we can put in place to minimise employee risk and maintain output for critical customers?

Example 1 - Reduce shift duration by 30 mins

- Eliminates shift overlaps
- Allows better social distancing between shifts

Example 2 - Shift of 80 colleagues split into 4 groups of 20

- Different start times (6:45, 6:55, 7:05, 7:15)
- Different break times
- Limit size of co-worker

Example 3 - QA Batch Release (or other critical support groups)

- Physically split into different parts of the building
- Different breaks to eliminate overlap

Example 4 - Reduce team size to ensure workers must safely maintain distance to co-workers of 2m

Limit team contact to a minimum

Map the journey for Cleaning, Social Distancing and De-Densification

To understand higher risk areas,

- Understand who is on-site, when are they on site and where they are
- Map your cleaning resources, frequency, sequence and schedule accordingly
- De-bottleneck high traffic areas (e.g. scheduling shifts and teams)
- Implement physical measures to deliver results
- Have focused activities: e.g. stop non urgent project work to support de-densification

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Basic Response Measures

Encourage employees to:

- Wipe down their area at the start and end of shift / work
- Example of places to be wiped down: Lab benches, keyboards, desks, tools, equipment, buttons

Leadership:

- Hire additional cleaning staff
- Create space and time for thorough cleaning by cleaners (shift patterns etc.)
- Ensure enough time for colleague cleaning of their work areas
- Encourage colleague ownership for their work areas
- Review and adjust cleaning routines, frequencies etc.
- Prepare and test deep clean protocols in the event of a confirmed infected case. Consider outside professional decontamination contractors and perform test drill to be ready whenever a situation occurs

Hygiene

Rapid Response

Build and test decision trees for confirmed or suspected cases.

Build and test decision trees, including:

- Worker or contractor confirmed with the virus
- Worker or contractor with close contact with confirmed case
- Worker or contractor tested or referred for testing
- Worker or contractor with symptoms or contact with someone with symptoms

Question: How Can HR support social distancing behaviour?

- Place signs everywhere to serve as a reminder to employees e.g. wash hands, social distancing.
- Communication – regular messaging.

Communication

Tracking of employees

- Enforce working from home – Zero tolerance and challenge any colleagues who need to go into the workplace
- Reduce entry points and implement Temperature Screening
- Create badge access – review and identify critical staff to facilitate lockdown

- Logistics – Segregated delivery area, use of disposable gloves and disinfectant when handling received packages
- Air Quality – review options to increase the air changes. Review need / possibility of sanitising systems after confirmed case
- Occupational Health – Secure additional nurse on site; Hire an attendant in the carpark for any colleagues with concerns

Other points to note

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Basic Response Measures

Question: Why is it important for HR to intervene in vendor / visitor management policy?

Vendor and visitor management pose a risk of cross contamination. We can have a well-planned safe measure arrangement to reduce the risk of transmission to our employees but what would fall through the cracks is when HR does not intervene in this area. As vendors could be calling on multiple customers, they can constitute a greater community transmission risk than employees. Their circle of contact is broader than that of a typical employee. Therefore, eliminating all non-essential vendor visits is a prudent step to consider early. Where vendor visits are necessary, as in the case of physical audits or inventories or specialised equipment maintenance, all the workplace prevention steps should be rigorously followed.

Question: What are all the work arrangements considerations HR need to have?

Evaluation of effectiveness of work arrangements through an employee survey will aim to gain insights into the challenges of the extraordinary working conditions in the time of the pandemic and how employees are doing and addressing their current challenges, how they set up their “new” everyday life and what motivates them.

As a rule, to mitigate the impact of the pandemic outbreak on business operations, we recommend some considerations as follow:

1. Role and process identification

- Determine which roles can telecommute and which is necessary to work in the office to map out the possible changes in work arrangements for employees
- Review work processes and providing the necessary IT equipment to employees if it helps enable work from home.
- Review critical roles within the business, develop contingency plan and identify infrastructure needs in case of a transmission.

2. Extent of telecommuting

Determine how you would like to implement telecommuting at your workplace and what is possible

- I. Based on role identification
- II. Based on alternating / split teams for roles that cannot telecommute
 - Review job responsibilities
 - Consider teleconferencing possibilities
- III. 100% telecommute

3. Considerations for roles that cannot telecommute

Determine if your organisation has the facilities and resources for Safe Distancing

- Workplace requirements
- Space
- Demarcation of worksite
- Rest areas set up

Assist the business with split team arrangement for to ensure different teams observe the same set of rules.

For example:

- Employees from the same function / LOB must be split into teams.
- No employee should work in more than one team or office location.
- No cross-deployment or interaction between employees in different shifts, teams or worksites, even outside of work.
- Teams should be alternating ideally on a weekly basis; if not possible, work hours should be staggered.
- No swop between teams should be allowed.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: Basic Response Measures

4. Employee check in

Evaluate of effectiveness of work arrangements

- Conduct survey to gain insights into the challenges of the extraordinary working conditions in the time of the pandemic
 - Sample questions to include
 - How are employees doing and addressing their current challenges?
 - How have they set up their “new” everyday life? What motivates them?



MNC

Multinational Corporation

Having said the above, it is important to check local legislation as we have seen in the COVID pandemic that some countries would enact revised health legislation in response to COVID-19. These laws would impact an employer's ability to issue certain directions to their employees.

Useful resource: <https://www.enterprisesg.gov.sg/-/media/esg/files/covid-19/guide-on-business-continuity-planning-for-covid-edition-3-15-april-2020final.pdf?la=en>

Question: What processes can we follow if employees have been exposed to or contracted the virus?

Case A: Employee comes back from a trip in a high-risk area or has been in contact with an infected person

- Employees coming back from a trip in a high-risk area, or who have been in contact with an infected person, shall work in home office for at least 14 days and notify the manager immediately. The manager must inform the local crisis management team.
- Employees whose close social environment (e.g. household members) have had contact with a confirmed case and show symptoms, should stay in home office for at least 14 days and notify the manager immediately. The manager must inform the local crisis management team.
- Employees who show signs of respiratory infection (fever or feeling of fever, cough, breathing difficulties) within 14 days shall first seek medical advice by phone, and not visit the medical practice without prior agreement, as they might infect others.

Case B: Employee shows symptoms of acute respiratory illness on site

- Employees who appear to have symptoms, i.e. cough, shortness of breath, upon arrival to work, or become sick during the day, should be separated from other employees, be sent home immediately and should seek medical advice by phone.
- Affected employees shall cover their mouth and nose while they are leaving the building.
- The line manager shall be informed immediately. The manager must inform the local crisis management team.

If case A applies as well, or infection is confirmed:

- Affected employees must not be sent home, but immediate isolation and transportation to a hospital with an emergency ambulance must be ensured.
- Employees (potentially all employees in the related building or area) who have been in contact with the impacted employee should be sent to work from home for at least 14 days.
- The Crisis Management Team must be notified immediately.
- An investigation should be started to track movements of the infected colleague and respective contacts on site.
- If the affected employee visited critical areas such as the canteen, consider shutting down and disinfecting relevant areas before reopening.
- Allow for proper cleaning and sanitation of the building and any potential common areas that may have been compromised.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

The Global Pandemic has impacted many aspects of our everyday activities, both on business and personal front. As businesses and individuals adapt to the situation, HR needs to take a proactive approach to review the suite of people practices and consider how businesses can be better supported.

As shared in the previous chapters, the top priority for HR during the pandemic phase is to “Put People First” whilst balancing business requirements and sustainability. It is advisable to look at all major HR processes within the organisation and consider if the policies (e.g. Compensation & Benefits, Hiring Practices, and Medical Provision) and processes need any recalibration. Instead of putting processes into a standstill (e.g. stopping training due to safe distancing requirements), consider if there are opportunities that can be tapped on to bring in a new platform or revamp the way of working. Business savvy HR professionals can look at supporting business continuity and improve employees’ experience.

Included in this section are some probing questions that one can consider during the pandemic. Discussions and guides curated are intended to provide practical advice and support to ensure these people processes run as smoothly as possible during this time.

Question: What are the considerations for revision to people processes?

People processes do not function in isolation and are set up to support business requirements. Hence, during a pandemic crisis whereby business models are critically reviewed and become agile, HR needs to take the lead to evaluate the full suite of people processes and consider if people processes need to be revised.

During a Pandemic, HR would need to consider the following questions:

- How to respond during a pandemic phase?
- What is the business impact on people practices?
- What are the social changes that will impact people practices?
- How to organise manpower?
- What is the pandemic impact on performance management, reward, employer branding and other people processes?

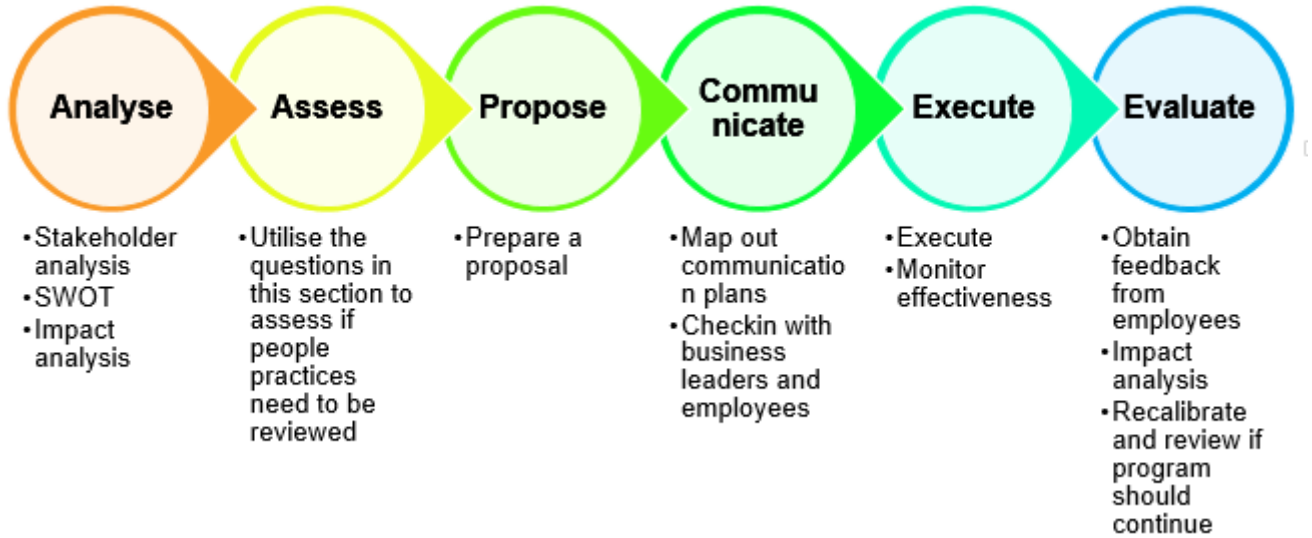
Taking into consideration both short-term and long-term impact, HR would need to consider if the adjustments required can be implemented for the future or if it is just a temporary measure. It is important to view the situation with positivity and this may be a good opportunity to make changes to people processes that have taken a long time to evolve due to challenges in mindset shift. Evaluate what, how and when the changes are required and build in communication plans. The reaction to the crisis needs to be prompt and timely. It would take good business insights as well as acute understanding of the employee population for sound adaptation to be made at speed.

A decision taken by another company, being shared as a best practice may or may not be ideal for your organisation. Broadly, do consider how the crisis has impacted your business and which in turn require a review in the people processes. Look at your major processes and programs and consider if any changes made should relate only to the short term or long term.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

You can consider the following steps when reviewing: -



Let us take a quick view on some of the major people processes and perform a quick check if any review is needed.



DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Talent Attraction and Manpower Management

For many organisations, manpower planning would have been completed in the previous year. However, it is still necessary to review the situation and do not hesitate to work with business leaders to review how manpower numbers or plans are to be revised. Let us take a look at some consideration points under the area of Manpower Management and Talent Attraction.

Question: What are the considerations a HR professional should take note of for Manpower Plans?

Stay in tune with the business performance and work closely with business leaders. There could be situations whereby organisations have to look at the manpower plans and adjust in accordance to business performance. As business plans changes, is there still a need to continue with the recruitment? In some other cases, perhaps, the recruitment numbers need to be increased to deal with additional legislations, customs requirements, business process changes or increasing business (reference to [Annex 8 – Case studies on how HR responds](#)) of employers' case studies "Coronavirus: How Employers Around the Globe Are Responding" where firms dealing with ecommerce such as Amazon are hiring an additional 100,000 warehouse and delivery workers).

Besides the numbers, it is also necessary to review the skillsets that the organisation is hiring for. Consider if there is a need to review the competencies that the organisation is looking to hire. Are those competencies still required or should there be new competencies / skills that the organisation should look at? Whilst it is necessary to conduct the review, be attuned to ensure that the changes are not knee jerked responses.

Question: How to organise manpower?

After reviewing the organisation's manpower plans, there is also a need to review the manpower organisation internally. It is key to identify critical positions, duties and work scope that highly impact the organisation's operational continuity. Due to geographical limitations, evaluate if there is risk of losing the talent. If so, what will be the business continuity plan to be put in place? This information will come in handy when considering split team and remote work arrangements as well as return to work plan thereafter. In view of the long duration of split team and / or remote work arrangements, proper planning and communication need to be considered for the team to remain productive.



SME

Small and Medium Enterprise

In an SME where the manpower is leaner than in larger corporations, if any department is affected, there is a need to see if there is any possibility of redeploying manpower to other teams or departments within the organisation. In a business slow down, it is useful to utilise the opportunity to plan for manpower to cross train and pick up new skills to be even more versatile to support different departments.



MNC

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One question that HR personnel responsible for managing employee on overseas assignment is whether they should repatriate staff who are presently working overseas. In this pandemic, we have seen that many countries have advised temporary residents to return to their home countries and have warned that their ability to provide consular service to citizens based overseas may be impaired. This has prompted many assignees to ask their employers whether they should return to their home location.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Question: What are the changes that recruiters need to make on recruitment processes?

During the pandemic, many countries mandated remote work to control the spread of the virus. It is highly probable that this will affect how and where organisations recruit from. As with all recruitment process, there are a few key areas for consideration: -

1. Recruitment platforms and mode

Restrictions are imposed for onsite activities and hence organisations will need to shift to virtual recruitment platforms. It is no longer possible to continue with recruitment fairs and university talks, so how can the talent attraction process be managed? Besides the traditional recruitment platforms, also consider if any social medium can be utilised.

Besides the medium, recruiters can also explore how the recruitment mode will be like. Are we just looking at posting a job or could there be other innovative ways?

2. Target audience base

Whilst traditionally organisations hire in local markets in view of the work location, there can be consideration if the candidate search can expand to other regions during a pandemic. This is especially so if the work scope can be performed from any location. The decision will impact on the recruitment platforms to be used and this will help to expand the target audience base. Despite the possibilities being presented, organisations should carefully consider this aspect in relation to the business nature. For instance, in organisations whereby there are limitations to overseas tax support or if there are requirements to come for onsite work, the aspect of recruitment without boundaries may not be ideal. Also consider if there will be internal equity issues on the employee's end should the remuneration currency remain the same regardless of the work location.

3. Job Posting

To better support a virtual / online recruitment plan, efforts to facilitate the process will also start during the job posting stage. Build in video response capability in the job postings, explore technology such as Sonru whereby candidates can record their response to the pre-defined questions that are set for the respective job roles. This helps the hiring team to better screen applications. For cost saving alternatives, candidates can record their response, post it to YouTube and share the link with HR.

4. Interview

After the shortlisting is completed, the next consideration is on how the interviews should be conducted. As with the concept of exploring virtual recruitment events, consider if interviews should also be shifted to a virtual / online (video conferencing) format. There may be legislation governing the conduct of face-to-face interviews and in fact the arrangement is also beneficial to better protect the safety of both the applicants and hiring team. For the online sessions, consider tools such as Teams Meeting or Zoom to have the virtual face to face interaction .

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Talent Attraction and Manpower Management

Question: How can HR support hiring managers to move to virtual interview process?

As this may be a new change for some hiring managers, HR can review how the stakeholders can be better supported. Besides ensuring that the technical tool is available, do ensure that the users are trained and understand how to navigate the functionalities. Your IT team will be able to work with you to recommend suitable tools to be used within the organisations and advise if any security settings need to be calibrated. Trial sessions can be run with the hiring managers so that they feel confident to utilise the tool. For a better virtual interview experience, you can refer to [Annex 9 – Tips for Virtual Interviews](#) for some tips.

Question: How should effective induction be done during a pandemic?

An effective onboarding is the first block to success for all new joiners in an organization. A well planned and executed induction program will help to quickly assimilate the new joiners, provide information about the organisation and its policy, and increase employee engagement. Despite the challenges, it is important to make contact as soon as possible. Review the current induction program and consider if the contents, duration and mode need to be adjusted. Consider the following points: -

- Ensure that the new joiner has access to the technology / equipment they need. Should you plan for the induction on Day 1, ensure that they have the equipment delivered / handed over, properly setup and tested beforehand.
- Ensure availability of key personnel in the program. If the CEO, function heads or other functional personnel are involved, do check their calendar and ensure that they have the virtual invite beforehand. Do ensure that the application to be used is in order, this will help to ensure that the new employee still get to meet the key people they will interact with.
- Look at the contents of the program and review if any information needs to be updated. For instance, there may be changes in certain process flows, provision of benefits that may be cancelled such as shuttle bus service and importantly do include pertinent information relating to the company's policies on the pandemic response.
- In a face-to-face set up, it is common for an induction to go on for a day or even two. However, with the shift to virtual platform, it is important to consider that the attention span will be shorter. Consider if there is a need to split the program into bitesize modules and look at including online quizzes or gaming to increase interest and improve employee experience.
- As with any new programs, do not hesitate to obtain feedback from both the employees and personnel who are facilitating the program. The feedback will help evaluate effectiveness and look at continuous improvement ideas.

Employer Branding & Value Proposition

A strong Employer Brand and relevant Employer Value Proposition (EVP) is essential to support organizations' pursuit in the talent war. There is long term benefit to upkeep efforts in this area.

Question: Should HR continue to focus on employer value proposition and employer branding during the pandemic?

Yes, HR should continue to focus on employer branding and uphold the employer value proposition. In a crisis, business needs may be the focal points of many Management Teams' discussions. However, for an organisation to ride through the wave, people resources must remain confident, motivated and support the business decisions made. Despite the challenges, businesses will reap their returns if evaluations are made both from a bottom-line perspective and impact to people. A responsible employer who continues to build the employer brand will remain strong, gain trust of new applicants, current employees and even external parties such as the Government, vendors and suppliers. HR should always support business leaders as a sounding board especially on actions that may impact its people and avoid jumping into rash decisions that may negatively impact the organisation for short-term gains.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Employer Branding & Value Proposition

Question: What considerations should HR take to reinforce its employer brand?

Review the employer value proposition and look at how to build a stronger employer brand by keeping close to the employees, market trends and market sentiments. Consider if the EVP is still applicable in the current market. For instance, with news going around on the various illness rates and death tolls, employees may start to rethink the purpose of their work. In this case, look at how the organisation is contributing to the society e.g. support to the local initiatives to deliver facial masks, import of medical products, awareness drive. Sharing of the importance of the organisation's products and services to the communities is also one way to fulfil the individual need for self-actualization. On top of that, what has the company been advocating about the work environment / experience? If the attraction is on nice office setup, modern and cozy pantries with well-stocked supplies, the pull factor needs to be revisited. Consider what makes an employer brand attractive in these times. Besides these, continuing efforts to support and engage your existing employees are also pertinent to ensure that the employer brand remains in positive light. Research what other companies are doing ([Annex 8 - How HR Responds](#)) and also explore innovative ideas to address your employees' needs.

Question: How can HR build a stronger employer brand during the pandemic?

In the remote work environment, continue your staff communications to share on what the company has done to support and to get feedback from the employees so as to stay close to the ground. Provide opportunities for employees to share these initiatives to the wider community. The word of mouth publicity works well to provide insights on the company's efforts and initiatives. These could work hand in hand with engagement activities such as online contests to gather the highest number of likes on social media photos postings. On the company's end, look at opportunities to share the stories over the company's website, social media and seek out appropriate media coverage.



SME

Small and Medium Enterprise

To build the employer branding, SMEs can consider reviewing their mission, vision and values to strengthen them during this period. SME business owners, together with their HR, can engage their employees to craft this together via a virtual platform. Tools such as Google Jamboard or [App.conceptboard.com](#) are example of collaborative tools that can be used. Such an activity would also provide an opportunity for teambuilding and empowerment of employees. One of the attractiveness of SMEs to employees is also the family culture. During this time, SMEs can also focus on strengthening the family culture by running online initiatives to create a greater sense of belonging. HR policies that emphasises the importance of family can also be considered. This can be as simple as inviting employees and their families to do an online workout i.e. Zumba together.

Learning & Development

Question: What are the key learning and development considerations that HR should focus on during this period?

As important as it is to ride out of the pandemic crisis, it is also critical for businesses to look at how learning & development can continue. Mandatory learning such as courses relating to Code of Conduct and Compliance learning are essential to continue mitigating business risks even during the challenging times. Online training platforms should be frequently updated with professional development opportunities, particularly to help employees and supervisors adjust to working remotely.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Learning & Development

During this time, HR can utilise the opportunity to conduct a training needs analysis and converting them to bite sized virtual learning. This could involve:

- Working with leadership to identify the possible changes to the future of business.
- Identifying the competencies that will be required by employees.
- Determining the current skill of the workforce, training gaps and identify who requires training.
- Researching on publicly available workshops or MOOC modules, setting up an in-house content design team or engaging a vendor to create bite sized virtual learning sessions to fulfil the training needs.

Question: What are some online tools that HR can utilise to support training?

Utilising available online tools and integrating them together can be a great and effective way to conduct training in an engaging manner. The tools that HR can consider using are as follows:

- [Padlet](#)
- [Jamboard](#)
- [Project](#)
- [eduClipper](#),
- [Kahoot!](#)

For 70 other tools, refer to <https://www.nwea.org/blog/2019/75-digital-tools-apps-teachers-use-to-support-classroom-formative-assessment/>

A note of caution when utilising any tools would be to ensure that you check on the privacy policy and terms and conditions of the tools to ensure that you protect your organization's data from data leaks and cyber-attacks.

Performance Management & Compensation & Benefits

Performance Management

Question: How to effectively manage performance management?

Looking back to the principles of performance management, the scheme is put in place to effectively set performance targets and tie in relevant incentive plans to drive a certain set of behavior. This in turn helps drive business targets, productivity and profitability. Given the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on employees' work and professional lives, and on business priorities overall, it is important for management to adjust their performance review process. Example, in some industries, employees are unable to work productively or have any output if they are not able to be at their physical worksite (i.e. laboratory, construction). Employees in these instances are unable to continue delivering on their objectives for the year. A review of a realistic performance measurement would be needed.

Gartner ([The impact of COVID-19 on performance management by Arj Bagga 22 July 2020](#)) recommends that managers and employees are encouraged to adapt check-in conversations in four ways:

1. Focus on Contribution, Not Performance

Assessing performance will be harder given changes in business priorities and personal circumstances that have likely affected employees' ability to meet performance expectations. With that in mind, it is important to understand how to balance outcomes and behaviors when assessing employee performance. It is important for organisations to equip managers for different kinds of conversations, validating the contributions employees have made over whether they are meeting rigid KPIs.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Performance Management

In times of uncertainty, managers must exercise empathy during regular conversations with employees. Conversations during a pandemic should begin with questions about employees' well-being and safety as a priority – not questions around productivity or even performance. For example, managers might ask: How are you managing balancing professional and personal demands? How are you adjusting to working remotely? Are you getting the support you need from your peers? Is there anything we can be doing differently as a team? What timelines will we need to adjust?

2. Adjust the agenda of check-in conversations to acknowledge new realities

3. Enable flexible goal setting

For most companies, goal setting is still an annual activity. Employees acknowledge that their roles are evolving quickly; they are learning new skills, performing new activities and collaborating across business lines. Leaders also acknowledge the dynamic nature of corporate strategies. With business plans changing almost daily in response to the pandemic, we need goal-setting processes to keep up. Organisations must encourage and enable employees to adapt goal setting to keep pace with dynamic business shifts. Focus on shorter term prioritisation of workflow rather than long term goals susceptible to change. An approach that managers can take with their teams is to implement agile methodologies such as sprint or scrum to meetings. This will allow for the team to keep up with any changes, be flexible with goals and be focused on the shorter-term goals.

Distractions from the news, responsibilities caring for others at home and adapting to working remotely or newly adjusted hours will likely shift the way employees approach their work and projects. During a pandemic, it is important to help employees focus on short-term priorities to create visibility in the fog. Instead of asking about past progress or priorities for the next month or quarter, discuss work plans for the next day or the next week to help employees view work in more manageable chunks. environment.

4. Help employees prioritise through short-cycle work planning

Formal mid-year reviews remain a great opportunity for organisations to engage employees, recognise their contributions and identify what high performance looks like during disruption. HR should ensure that employees continue to have informal conversations with their managers. They are important opportunities for employees to adjust their goals and identify ways they can upskill to remain relevant in the new work

(Adapted from: [Managing performance evaluations during a pandemic by Senior People Scientist, Culture Amp](#))

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Performance Management

Question: Should you keep running performance evaluations during the COVID-19 pandemic?

When deciding what to do during a time of crisis, answering these three simple questions can help guide you while you decide whether you will continue your performance evaluations, or abbreviate your approach for the time being:

1. Is your performance review process established (e.g. have you conducted at least two cycles)?
2. Is a large part of your employee population still working?
3. Do you tie bonus payments to performance reviews?

If you answered “yes” to the first two questions, in terms of workforce continuity, your organisation is running close to business as usual. You might be able to schedule your performance evaluations as planned.

If you answered “no” to either of the first questions, you may want to consider an abbreviated approach to evaluations that focuses on iterative goal setting throughout the crisis, with a strong concentration on continuous, on-going feedback.

Question: What should you do about performance-related bonuses?

Organisations pay out bonuses to further incentivise high performance and tie them to individual and / or company performance. During a pandemic, bonuses can be a lever to pull, either to support your employees by giving everyone a bonus, or to save money and get through tough times by canceling bonuses. Let us consider the consequences of both avenues.

Giving everyone the same rating and the same bonus

While we can understand the desire to take this approach, we believe it could have a negative impact on employee motivation and performance. Imagine if an employee worked hard, refined and acquired crucial skills, met their goals, role-modeled your company's values, and went out of their way to help their teammates be successful. On the same team, another employee demonstrated a desire to learn and grow, has gaps in their skill set, and worked hard but was not as successful, while a third team member did the bare minimum to keep their job. Giving all three of them the same rating and bonus could have multiple negative consequences. The high-performing employee could lose motivation after working extra hard but not be recognised for it and be rated the same as the others. This loss of motivation could lead to a potential drop in productivity or become a retention risk.

Another possible negative consequence is that low-performing employees could view this as a sign that a mediocre performance might be ignored or accepted. Finally, the motivated employee who was working hard but was just not there yet might miss out on key conversations, learning and development opportunities, and coaching to improve their performance as a result of an abandoned process. This employee might lose motivation and you might lose a future high-performing employee. If you are considering providing financial support for employees during times of uncertainty, it is recommended to clearly communicate that any monetary aid is *not* tied to performance or considered a bonus.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Performance Management

Not giving out any bonuses

To cut back on bonuses tied to both company and individual employee performance had negative effects on both effectiveness and employee commitment during the crisis. Likewise, when learning and development (e.g. coaching, functional training) were cut back, it had even larger negative effects on both effectiveness and employee commitment than cutting back on performance compensation. Therefore, in order to maintain employee effectiveness, it may be critical to honor a commitment to bonuses if they are a normal and expected part of your compensation system. However, during a pandemic, some organisations might simply not have the option of giving out bonuses as it might threaten their ability to remain in business. If this is the case, be transparent in communicating why that decision was made and what employees can expect in the future.

Source: Mercer 5 May 2020: Risks and opportunities in performance management post-COVID-19 Q&A with Lori Holsinger, Ph.D.

Question: How are companies conducting performance reviews considering COVID-19?

Many companies are communicating to employees that they are valued and important to the business, while also making rapid adjustments to goal setting, ratings and rewards. Rewards decisions are commonly governed by performance ratings. However, during a pandemic, some companies may be considering extensive adjustments to performance ratings to trigger bonus payouts or other pay changes. A few companies are intentionally separating rating and pay decisions during the pandemic. They point to the mixed messages an employee receives when getting a rating that does not align with their performance. This misalignment leaves companies more exposed to potential litigation if they later sever employees due to performance.

Question: Are performance goals and metrics the same now as they were pre-pandemic? If not, how have they changed?

For roles like sales and manufacturing which have defined goals and targets, companies are currently reviewing adjustments to account for increased or decreased demand due to COVID-19. However, they are struggling to decide what adjustments to make given the uncertainty of the current situation. Regardless of role, some companies are now incorporating the “compassion factor” in how they communicate performance expectations, such as goals, priorities and metrics. They may take into consideration individual remote-working circumstances. Being physically present in the office during the workweek is very different to working from home, potentially with both spouses working together and multiple children under foot. Because of factors outside the employee’s control, the home working environment is simply not the same as the workplace. Two employees in the same job, with one working from home and one from the office, will perform differently. Therefore, they should have different performance goals and metrics.

Question: What changes are companies making to performance reviews in a remote-working world?

Managers and employees can simply shift from closed-door, in-office conversations to remote, technology-based discussions. But this comes with its own opportunities and limitations. One key opportunity is the ability for managers to forge better connections with each of their direct reports. Now is a chance for the manager to ask how things are going, acknowledge the challenges of this new working arrangement and express their empathy. Understanding the employee’s unique working situation can allow the manager to recognise the employee’s specific challenges. The manager can confirm current priorities for the employee’s job and explore their concerns.

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Performance Management

On the other hand, companies need to heed the technology risk. With the influx of technology reliance in this new work structure, the likelihood of listening or recording knowingly or unknowingly is high. Discussions risk being overheard. Recordings made by employees could create repercussions for the company later. What is a company to do? Proactive companies have issued guidelines on how to stay connected to employees while taking steps to be thoughtful about risk. One consumer goods company has advised managers to use conference calls instead of video platforms to hold performance review and talent planning conversations. Although the regular phone may seem antiquated, it provides the highest security against this real risk. This risk also exists for company board meetings, where sensitive business strategy and financial discussions take place. A good rule of thumb is: If you are sharing sensitive information, such as ratings, compensation or low-performance feedback, hold these discussions by phone.

Question: How has employee feedback changed? What advice for companies wanting to turn remote working into an opportunity for manager-employee feedback?

Managers tend not to be at their best in times of stress and pressure. So, feedback is likely worse compared to a pre-pandemic environment. Managers that are already skilled at coaching employees will not suddenly stop providing helpful guidance because of a different environment. However, for less skilled managers, the work-from-home forum presents a valuable chance to hit the “reset button” and connect with their employees one on one. Effective coaching requires empathetic and action-oriented managers. The new working environment, created by the pandemic, is a good opportunity for managers to practice being empathetic.

Question: What if managers need a jump-start to begin talking with their employees and building greater trust?

As a practical action plan, managers can schedule 20 or 30 minutes to check in with each employee. Use this time to engage in dialogue that shows empathy. Give managers words to get them started: “Working from home is a change for all of us. Our unique home environments, such as children or family members in the high-risk category for the virus, affect each of us in a different way. So, I wanted to check in with you one on one. How is it going? What is working smoothly for you? What is more challenging? Is there anything I can do to help you?” Managers should be open to sharing the same information with their employees, acknowledging both the challenges and the opportunities, and building trust in the process. This foundation building will not only help the employee thrive in their contributions at work but will also support them during this pandemic and beyond. When asked, most managers would like to have a greater impact on their direct reports by helping them contribute to the business and reach their full potential. The remote working arrangements as a result of the pandemic is an opportunity for them to take the first step.

Question: Do performance reviews change for good after the health crisis passes? Why?

There is a great opportunity to change performance management for the better post-pandemic. It all depends on how companies act now. Companies are more likely to find themselves in a positive place if they promote manager-employee connections during this crisis and champion one-on-one discussions that carry empathy and compassion.

[Click here](#) for Additional Resource - Talent Retention Toolkit for the New Normal

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Compensation & Benefits

Tying to the review of performance management framework, it is also essential to consider if a revision to the Compensation & Benefits framework is required. In view of the various unique situations faced, it is important to establish “special circumstances” policy modifications to the existing compensation & benefits policies. In any revisions or changes that consider special circumstances, factor in discussions if the changes made is fair, transparent and if they would set a questionable precedence.

Question: How to manage leave during a pandemic period?

- Pay hourly-rated employees who are asked to work from home or take leave of absence if they are tested positive.
- Pay benefits to employees who are asked to take leave of absence.
- Allow for workplace and leave flexibilities such as for liberal leave and non-punitive like daycare / school closures, as well as caring for ill family members.
- Set up sick leave absences policy: “Send home” policy for when employees become ill at work. “Return to work” policy, including a method to verify employees are no longer contagious.

To include this link on MOM’s leave arrangements FAQ

<https://www.mom.gov.sg/covid-19/frequently-asked-questions/salary-and-leave-arrangements>

Question: How should employee compensation and benefits be handled?

- Employee compensation and payroll must be continued as usual.
- Consider different variables if compensation needs to be reviewed when telecommuting or accounting for flexible worksite arrangements, be it staggered and / or multiple shifts.
- Review the Liability / Health insurance coverage.

To include this link on MOM’s salary arrangements FAQ

<https://www.mom.gov.sg/covid-19/frequently-asked-questions/salary-and-leave-arrangements>

Question: What are the advisory to guide employers and employees on retrenchment benefits?

(Singapore: Updates on retrenchment benefits during COVID-19 by Bird & Bird, Seow Hui Goh, Natasha Cheng, 05-2020)

In Singapore, the Ministry of Manpower has restated that retrenchment should always be considered as a last resort when managing manpower costs. This is in view of the support measures provided by the government including training grants and wage support such as the Jobs Support Scheme.

Employers who are in a sound financial position should continue to pay retrenchment benefits in accordance with their existing employment contracts, collective agreements, memoranda of understanding, or the prevailing norm for retrenchment benefit (between 2 weeks and 1 month salary per year of service for employees with 2 years' of service or more), in accordance to the Tripartite Advisory. Employers whose businesses are adversely affected are encouraged to work together with the union (if applicable) or their employees to renegotiate for a fair retrenchment benefit which corresponds with the employees' years of service.

For unionised employers who are experiencing severe financial difficulties, they are encouraged to negotiate with their unions for a mutually accepted retrenchment package. For non-unionized Employers, they are encouraged to support the affected employees by providing a lump sum ranging from one and three months of salary instead. Lastly, employers are encouraged to support their retrenched employees in gaining new employment through business networks or by utilising the Workforce Singapore Employment and Employability Institute platforms.

Reference: <https://www.mom.gov.sg/covid-19/advisory-on-retrenchment-benefit-to-retrenched-employees>

(8 Principles to manage executive compensation during Covid-19 by Shai Ganu and Tan Yong Fei, Willis Tower Watson)

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Compensation & Benefits

Question: What can companies do in the short, medium, and longer-term during this downturn?

The following outlines some of the immediate actions that companies adopted in refining compensation programs to respond to the crisis:

- **Year of two halves:** The crisis has necessitated immediate and decisive action by management teams as they focus on the well-being of the business, employees, and supply chain partners. To help companies get past the survival phase, it is important to channel management's efforts on crisis management. This may lead to some non-conventional approaches in the short term. For example, linking management's KPIs to the percentage of workforce who are protected from the COVID-19 infection, or to healthcare and recuperation spending, or preventing job losses, or encouraging social distancing and working from home protocols. Once the business operations stabilise and companies have a better understanding of market conditions, then they can resume normal performance measures and targets.
- **Show solidarity:** For highly impacted industries, top executives have volunteered to take cuts in their fixed salary while maintaining some form of target variable incentive. This could still be motivating to executives especially if the right amount of equity is granted at low prices. For less impacted industries, salary increments of top executives have largely been frozen. These actions be a gesture to preserve cash. More importantly, they can make a positive impact if the funds are set aside for COVID-19 / CSR / ESG efforts. Leaders of leading organizations have shown to take the lead on this.
- **Wait and see:** This might be the only time that a "wait and see" approach is deemed reasonable and appropriate. Rather than spending time and energy reviewing incentive plans, forecasting financial outcomes and setting performance goals, management should focus their attention on human capital management. For example:
 - Review severance provisions to understand cost implications of potential headcount reduction proposals.
 - Ensure the company is protected against potential takeover actions.
 - Review change-in-control provisions to motivate executives to seek out and collaborate on potential M&A transactions that are in the best interests of shareholders.
- **Trust:** As a result of the above, the 2020 financial year's short and long-term incentive plans are likely to be in a state of limbo. With annual increments delayed, the short-term incentive (STI) and long-term incentive (LTI) targets based on budgets approved before COVID-19 would not make sense now. However, what should remain clear is the articulation of the plan's principles as well as key metrics underlying those principles. As for the actual targets, it is best to revisit them at a later stage, the earliest possibly in July or for some companies even after FY2020 has ended. Trust is crucial during this time. In the medium to longer-term, companies could focus on these actions to restore stability and return their business back to the 'new normal'.
- **Focus on a few key things:** Employees, especially their wellbeing including physical, mental, social and financial, should be the focus. It is critical to understand managements' actions taken for the broader workforce and assess alignment. Boards should remain briefed on broader workforce actions, for example:
 - Continuing pay and benefits for workers impacted by store or factory shutdowns.
 - Providing paid time off for hourly associates diagnosed with coronavirus or being quarantined.
 - Paying hourly workers who cannot work due to office closures or remote work policies.
 - Providing stipends to support work-from-home arrangements for impacted staff.
 - Providing additional pay (hourly increases, special bonuses) for essential / front-line workers. In addition, company should consider ways to conserve cash, particularly for those seeking government assistance, and / or those deploying cash flow and cost containment initiatives. These could be reduced dividends, furloughs, and / or employee pay reductions.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Compensation & Benefits

- **On-going enhanced communication:** During this period, proactive and effective communication, and engagement with employees is key. We expect on-going communication and implementation of human capital management metrics into incentive plans and / or governance oversight to progress. It is important to document and analyse the learnings from the outcomes of the pandemic and adjust the longer-term compensation strategies for companies to build resilience.
- **Retention:** In times of crisis, business opportunities and talent pool become available, and at times, at a bargain. Development and / or enhancement of the existing talent retention program, therefore, becomes crucial. A simple gesture of annual pay increment for selected few in a potentially zero percent market increment environment could go a long way.
- **Restructuring priorities:** While longstanding compensation principles (align, attract, retain, incent, and hold accountable) still apply, this may be a great opportunity to consider shifting the focus of its executive compensation plans to take a more balanced perspective, such as the increased focus on ESG measures and on all stakeholders.

Wellness, Health & Safety

In a health pandemic, it is imperative that as HR, part of the people response plan includes balance business needs and continuity plans with considerations of employees' health and safety. All in-person workshops should be postponed. The team should be actively working on alternative delivery methods with the providers. Additional web-based opportunities and suggestions on how to cope, lead and work in these challenging times will need to be introduced.

Question: What special policies would HR need to set in place to enable social distancing?

- **Staying Home:** All the organisational norms and cues about "toughing it out" must be relaxed, and a fair amount of trust must be placed in employees exercising caution rather than putting work commitments first. Shifting this mindset is a significant communications challenge as one that needs to come from every level, every function and every channel that it can be delivered through.
- **Teleconferencing:** Replacing face-to-face meetings wherever possible and an essential element of a social distancing strategy. Spare laptops around can often be re-deployed to conference rooms.
- **Individual Set-Up Platforms:** Zoom, BlueJeans, and Go-to-Meeting and Microsoft Office 365 includes Teams software and may be a better option for getting everyone up and running quickly.
- **Telecommuting:** Any job that can be done (even temporarily) on a remote basis should be authorised to do so. For most roles, all that's needed is the individual teleconferencing capabilities. If this is the first-time telecommuting is deployed, a comprehensive messaging and communications process should be planned for, that helps first-time telecommuters come up to speed on staying productive, staying in touch and collaborating in different ways.
- **Personal Equipment Policy:** If yours is a "desktop" culture, now is the time to work through a thorough personal equipment policy.
- **Events/Mass Gatherings:** Even if employee-attended events are local and do not require travel, any close-in congregation of people is a potential transmission vector, and participation should be carefully considered. The size, format and location of the event are all legitimate considerations.

Please also read ["What can HR do to Support Workplace Prevention"](#)

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Wellness, Health & Safety

Question: What is the travel guidance HR needs to provide to the employee to govern their safety?

Travel Restrictions

In general, travel should be reduced to an absolute minimum as trip might increase the risk of an infection / transmission with COVID-19. Exceptions are allowed with the Management's approval

	Business Travel	Personal Travel
Company's position	<p>Work travel should defer as far as possible. If work-related travel cannot be avoided, employers must ensure that their employees' health is adequately protected.</p> <p>We recommend HR to work with senior management by implement a one-point approval for all travel across businesses.</p>	<p>Since such arrangements are at the individual's discretion, companies cannot restrict an employee from travelling. However, it can require a declaration and should remind employees of government's advisory on travelling if such exist.</p>
What should HR do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers should accede to employees' request to not go on any work-related travel and should not penalize them for making such a request. • Ensure paid leave to cover quarantine or self-isolation period / a delay due to immigrations restrictions. • Ensure businesses are aware that provision for health coverage, should the employee be infected, will be borne by the business and not claimable by insurance. • Ensure businesses are aware that any taxes that arise from these trips are borne by the business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require a declaration for personal trips and employees returning from trip to be isolated for 14 days. • Remind employees of existing government travel advisory to defer non- essential trips (if any). • Advise if coverage of health / medical insurance for corporate plans would be affected. • Remind employees how their decision to travel may impact chances of approval, especially if they are on a work visa and require entry approval to enter the country again. • Advise leave treatment should an employee require to be on quarantine or self-isolation when they return or unable to return due to immigrations restrictions. • Inform employees of their tax implication (if any) depending on the country and duration of stay.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Wellness, Health & Safety

Management of non-essential travel: When travel is deemed “essential” – key customers, major transactions – the same workplace prevention activities outlined earlier should be explicitly communicated and reinforced through travel-specific channels.

Business travel: For essential travel, it may make sense to encourage people to drive. For longer, essential travel, additional levels of approval may be necessary. In vendor / customer relationships, it may also be possible to meet remotely, and in fact, that may be the preferred option for people at the destination site. At some point, it may be necessary to require essential business travelers to self-quarantine, by working from home for the local health ministry’s advised incubation period (14 days). Consider (and budget for) cancellation expenses. Inevitably, employees will have followed their company’s travel policies by purchasing 21 days in advance or buying non-refundable. Those expenses should fall to the company.

Personal travel: Adopting a policy on personal travel. It is shared responsibility, notice and some flexibility. That policy may include a requirement to advise HR of any domestic or international vacation travel destinations or a work-from-home. It is important to think through the organisation’s position in advance and give employees as much advance notice as possible. Conveying a sense of “we’re in this together” and “everyone has a responsibility to protect their colleagues and their families” are important and effective messages.



MNC Multinational Corporation

In a MNC environment, it is common for employees to have remote managers and these managers may not be aware of the travel guidance HR issued locally when approving employee’s leave applications for personal travel.

Question: What are the ways to ensure work productivity?

The ways to ensure work productivity include:

- Ways to think about innovation and meeting needs, standards, operating models and more to ensure teams have what they need to be their most creative and transformative.
- Maintain a mental wellbeing by establishing a daily routine.
- Remaining fit while working during pandemic.
- Ergonomics: how to work optimally at home, how to keep fit and how to reduce the strain on yourself as much as possible.

Travel Restrictions

In general, travel should be reduced to an absolute minimum as trip might increase the risk of an infection / transmission with COVID-19. Exceptions are allowed with the Management’s approval

Question: What are the different aspects of wellbeing of employees?

There are different aspects of employee wellbeing to consider. As HR, it is important to consider the current policies and support that we have for our employees and identify if we are sufficiently catering to the different aspects of their wellbeing.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Wellness, Health & Safety

Different aspects of wellbeing

Physical Wellbeing

- Health & Nutrition
- Exercise
- Work environment

Social Wellbeing

- Connectivity
- Purpose

Mental Wellbeing

- Work life balance/Integration
- Resilience
- Employee Assistance Programme

Intellectual Wellbeing

- Training and development
- Staying mentally stimulated and engaged

Psychological Wellbeing

- Self-acceptance & Confidence
- Autonomy & Agency

Financial Wellbeing

- Planning for the future
- Sense of security
- Understanding what support is available

Question: What are some steps that HR can take to support the wellbeing of employees?

Given that there are many changes with the way things must be done, there might be an increase in workload during the pandemic as everyone deals with the changes. Moreover, working virtually means that it is easy for back to back meetings to happen. This is not supported by how working from home blurs the boundaries between work and personal space. Employees can easily feel overwhelmed, experience fatigue and other negative emotions. Being able to support employees with their wellbeing is essential.

Wellbeing is enhanced when employees feel that they are heard, supported and appreciated. A key role that HR can play to support the wellbeing of employees is to check in with employees, listen to their needs and act upon them where possible. HR can also guide managers to hold empathic conversations as check in with their team on a regular basis.

Here is a checklist, adapted from the IHRP Wellbeing toolkit for the New Normal, on what you can do to support the wellbeing of employees.

- Adopt the [safe management measures](#)
- Establish cleaning and sanitization standards
- Appoint a contact to ensure health and safety of employees working in the office
- Ensure support is in place to promote good hygiene practice

Make the Workplace Safe

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Wellness, Health & Safety

Communication & Training

- Highlight rules, guidelines and support plan
- Reinforce travel restrictions and policies
- Provide tips and assistance for remote working
- Remind employees of hygiene practices
- Share information about business continuity plans and any crisis response plan

Support Wellbeing

- Be clear with flexible work and leave policies, as appropriate.
- Consider providing training to your line managers to equip them to spot and support wellbeing needs
- Deploy pulse surveys to provide employees the opportunity to feedback
- Consider return to work interview
- Consider offering services like employee assistance programmes or life coaching
- Consider online team bonding sessions
- Encourage employees to form online recreation groups
- Create peer support groups

Update Policies & Procedure

- Consider and consult employees about their work from home arrangements
- Assess your culture
- Review your policies and frameworks and ensure they are inclusive
- Re-assess health and benefits cover for employees including on site assessments and teleconsulting

Case Study - Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS)

Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS) is helping employees stay connected while working remotely through various initiatives like regular webinars for mental wellbeing, online fitness sessions, and online social activities like quiz among others. They launched their first Mental Health Ambassador Programme, aimed at supporting people who feel overwhelmed or need support.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Wellness, Health & Safety

Case Study - New Relic

New Relic a software company has initiated multiple initiatives like hosting virtual happy hours, meditation and yoga sessions, lunches, coffee chats, jam sessions, slack chats and video calls to help people stay connected. They have also allowed employees to take time off for sickness or caring activities without impacting holiday allowances.

Case Study - Inspire-Tech

Inspire-Tech, a local software development SME, has a weekly lunch and learn session. Employees take turns to share about a topic or run activities that are tied to their interest or development plans. This could be hip hop sessions, visual storytelling and even sharing how they learn to learn. These sessions are also used as check-ins and update sessions and have been a great way for employees to disconnect from work, to bond and connect. The company also has an outsourced third-party life coach to support their employees

Engagement & Recognition

Maintaining strong employee engagement has always been important, but in our largely work from home environment, it is more critical than ever. By working to understand the impact of our changed workplace on our teams we can work to actively ensure all our faculty, staff and librarians feel just as engaged today as they did before the pandemic.

(Maintaining Engagement & Recognition during COVID-19 by Erin Jackson, CHRO, May 8, 2020)

Question: How to maintain strong employee engagement during a Pandemic?

- 1. Connect through frequent and open communication:** When working remotely, employees can easily begin to feel disconnected. Schedule weekly check-ins with your team and manager to review what priorities are. Beyond an opportunity for quick realignment, these touch points assist us in feeling connected to broader goals of our departments and divisions.
- 2. Maintain the watercooler conversation:** For teams it is important to actively create social moments to reconnect. From creating a Microsoft Teams channel specifically for non-work-related conversations to scheduling meetings where you intentionally do not discuss work, there are lots of ways to maintain our social bonds while working from home.
- 3. Turn your camera on:** Yes, even if your home is not clean, your children are playing, or your hair is a bit messy. Allowing others to see your face during meetings helps everyone feel more connected to each other. You can add on a virtual background for better effects during the online session.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Engagement & Recognition

Question: How to better engage the workforce?

HR together with the managers should evaluate how teams work best from remote locations, the performance management of more distributed teams, recruiting and branding, learning and development, career mobility and inclusion. Include Tips and Tricks for working and leading remotely to all employees in the Online Training module.

Question: What are ways to virtually engage remote workforce?

With information from governments, health authorities and labor organisations continually changing, HR needs to communicate with their employees quickly as they react to changes even quicker. Managers should connect with their staff daily to reassure them that the business is reviewing government guidelines and how they plan to comply with them. They should also update employees on a weekly basis on how the business is performing and reassure staff that they are investigating all government assistance in order to protect employees. Finally, a space should be provided for employees to chat as if in the office such as a virtual coffee break. Talking things through with others will really help during this distressing time. Trust is an essential element of working from home. Some techniques can increase trust across departments. Daily stand ups can be scheduled where managers discuss work priorities per day for the team and themselves and enquire from employees if there are any blockers preventing the execution of their work. Team and employee performance should be measured by KPI metrics which should be reported weekly by each team to the manager. Managers should facilitate and enable frequent and honest communication from and to employees.

(8 Ways to Recognize Your Remote Employees (and Support Your Community) During the COVID-19 Pandemic by Erin Nelson, March 24, 2020)

A pandemic change the way we do business, from transforming our buying decisions to shifting where we work every day. Many companies are instituting mandatory work from home policies during the pandemic, and this abrupt change can be isolating and jarring for employees accustomed to coming into an office every day. Now more than ever, it is essential to understand the nuances behind engaging these newly virtual teams. Keeping your employees engaged and happy during a pandemic is essential to continuing to further your business and get results, even when companies are struggling.

Question: What are the ways to leverage recognition during the Pandemic?

1. Use Technology to Recognise Face-to-Face

It is likely that when your employees gathered in the office every day, they found ways to celebrate achievements together. You might celebrate closing a sale by having a round of applause, hitting a gong, or buying the office lunch. Now that your employees are working remotely, invite them to a virtual meeting using programs like Zoom or Skype to announce these major accomplishments. Your employees can socialise together, celebrate wins, and get that in-office feeling they might be lacking at home. Additionally, the extra face time will help alleviate the loneliness remote workers often feel on the job.

2. Reward Employees for Donating to Charities

Anyone around the world can donate to charities with a few simple clicks, which is what makes it such a great way to give back as a company no matter where you're located. One creative way to recognise remote employees is to send recognition to those who donate to these charities during this time of crisis and encourage others to do the same. You can motivate your employees to have a positive influence during the COVID-19 crisis by rewarding them for donating to charities. If you use a recognition platform, it will likely include the ability to make charitable donations, making it easy for your employees to donate. You can also add new charities to the platform by requesting them through your vendor. This way, your employees can donate to relevant and specific organisations that support their local communities, no matter where they are located.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Engagement & Recognition

3. Give Employees Local Gift Cards

Many local businesses are struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic due to mandatory closures. The best way to support these businesses is by purchasing gift cards that your employees can redeem later. Support your local businesses that might be struggling by purchasing gift cards to their stores and giving them as rewards to your employees. It is the perfect opportunity to stock up. Not only does this lend a personalized touch to your recognitions, but it also helps support your community in a time of need. Bonus points if your gift cards are purchased through an automated rewards platform that can send them via email. These platforms help eliminate the hassle of mailing gift cards to your remote employees.

4. Recognise Employees for Specific Actions

Adjusting to working from home can be hard, which is why it is essential to reward specific behaviors you would like to see more of. Not only does this show appreciation, but it also encourages other employees to follow suit. Do you have an employee who is responsive and attentive, even when working remotely? Write them a personalised message that details how appreciative you are of that employee's ability to remain responsive and available from their new home office. This will reinforce the value of communication throughout your newly remote team and motivate the employees who are already succeeding. Instead of interacting in the office, most employees are engaging via their company's chat programs, so be sure to recognise using them.

5. Recognise on Public Channels

Ensure recognition is public and optimally company-wide to celebrate achievements. This means you should recognise in a public channel like company intranet, LinkedIn or on a recognition platform that includes a social feed where everyone can view recognitions. Encourage others to engage with the recognition as well. When sent publicly, recognition is a huge motivator for employees, and encouraging peers to participate in the celebration only drives motivation further. Public recognition also helps your newly remote employees feel more connected to each other, giving them a chance to socialise and celebrate wins from wherever they are located.

6. Be Timely

It is important to keep track of what employees are doing at your company, even if your entire workforce is now working remotely. If you see behavior that should be rewarded, do not wait! Reward that employee instantly to make your recognition more meaningful. You can do this through a myriad of channels: on your company's chat program, using a recognition platform, a team-wide email, or highlighting the employee verbally during impromptu video meetings. Do not wait until an employee is offline to send recognition. The importance of timely recognition is only enhanced as many employees change their working hours to accommodate for at-home schedules. With children home from school during the coronavirus pandemic to having to home-cook every meal, many employees have changed their hours to provide more household support. Instead of waiting until they have gone offline for the day to send a recognition, make sure you send it immediately when the employee can see it, so the impact is greater.

7. Provide Opportunities for Professional Development

One creative way to reward and recognise employees from afar is by providing them professional development opportunities. With all this spare time (especially for sales team), now is the time to tackle new projects, learn new skills, and develop your repertoire. We have more spare time than ever to develop our professional skills, so take advantage by rewarding employees with online classes. Provide discounted or free online courses through platforms like LinkedIn Learning so employees can grow professionally in a time where they might feel stagnant. If you are using a rewards and recognition platform, you might already have discounts on these classes available. As an added bonus, you can see if professionals in your community are offering online classes and register your team for them. This achieves the goal of rewarding your employees with professional development and it supports your local community members who might be struggling to find work right now.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

Engagement & Recognition

8. Buy Them Lunch from Afar

It is no secret that restaurants are suffering because of COVID-19. One way to reward remote employees and support these restaurants in need is by ordering lunch from a local restaurant that offers delivery services. Many restaurants are depending on their delivery services to make it through their dine-in closures, so supporting them in this effort is a convenient (and tasty) way to reward an employee for going above and beyond. Buying an employee lunch is an easy way to reward remote employees. Employees will be grateful for one less meal to cook and a little less stress on their plates. As an added bonus, look for local restaurants instead of chains to support small businesses in a time of uncertainty.

Question: What can we learn from Remote Work?

There is much to be learned from this new transition to remote work. This is an opportunity to evaluate your company's ability to support employees during a time of upheaval and isolation. Our daily schedules have transformed. We can no longer look to the left and tap the person sitting next to us on the shoulder to ask a question. We spend more time typing and less time talking. After the pandemic winds down, we will need to take stock of the significance of these changes and do everything we can to make our virtual teams successful for the long-term. We do know one thing for certain: we are in an unprecedented global health crisis and rewarding and recognizing employees during a time of upheaval is more important than ever. People are naturally social creatures, and it is critical that we band together and leverage the resources we must stay connected. We must try to cultivate inclusive, connected digital communities that thrive with recognition.

Question: How do we continue with current employee recognition activities?

Show appreciation to colleagues for their commitment, address pandemic issues, and leadership sharing extensive consequences. Virtual appreciation, more bite size and manageable online sessions.

HR Operations & Technology

The pandemic brings a wave of possible acceleration in the area of digitalisation. If you have had challenges previously due to challenges to shift your people team's mindset to be future ready, this is the time to table the topic at management's meeting. Bring to the table data, analytics and importantly the ROI of possible investment needed in this arena. Having said that, do not undermine the importance of communication for any change in process and as in any change management, share the "What's in it for me".

Question: What are the top considerations for ongoing HR and IT collaboration?

It is key for HR and IT to collaborate on the following areas:

- Review the applications that employees will need in the short, medium and long-term.
- To evaluate if current applications and data are going to be made accessible from new locations and as positions change.
- Consider how the teams are expected to communicate and collaborate.
- Consider the help that will be made available to the employees and when issues arise.
- To investigate if any process changes need to be made to the onboarding and retirement.

As part of the process, HR leaders can boost employee experience by providing tips, guidance, training and communication for how individuals can navigate new processes and unfamiliar tools, such as web conferencing and advanced collaboration technologies. We can never assume everyone is equally proficient in what they have and need. From there, it's adding operating rhythm frequency for even greater success.

[Click here](#) for Additional Resource - Employee Engagement Toolkit for the New Normal

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

HR Operations & Technology

Question: How can the use of innovation help to reinvent the business in a time of crisis?

Companies that have taken the necessary steps to protect their employees can consider taking this time to rethink their business models and consumer perspectives. During the worst disruption to their supply chain and customer service, one organisation decided to take a fresh approach to the digitalisation of their customer and employee experience. They focused on investing in their internal and external digital platforms to enhance engagement to compensate for the touch points that would otherwise happen in the offices and stores. Other organisations are also using this time to ensure they are prepared for the future, where it is certain other crises will emerge.

Questions: What are HR's involvements in the digital transformation Journey?

Companies are different in terms of digital roadmap on the industry, size and company's financial ability. Regardless of your niche or sector, the digitisation of HR will serve to enhance your business in times of a pandemic in several ways. To help you embrace the digital transformation of your HR department, here are some key considerations:

- **Priorities:** Before implementing digital transformation within your HR department, you should sit with your team to identify your existing pain points in a collaborative environment, placing them in order of priority. Think about what work could not be completed because information or resources have not been fully digitized, and how can these challenges be resolved quickly? What process / practice that anchor employees to a physical workplace could be changed and which processes are ripe for greater digitisation (e.g., recruitment, onboarding)?
- **Research:** Explore how direct competitors and successful companies within your industry approach their HR digitisation initiatives, making notes of your discoveries. Appoint people within your HR department to uncover the platforms, tools, and technologies your competitors currently use as well as the internal practices they have implemented to evolve their approach to human resources.
- **Technology:** In the digital era, a wealth of tools and technologies exist to enhance HR activities in several crucial areas from administration over recruitment to employee engagement. For example, leveraging artificial intelligence as a first line of response for employee enquiry (e.g., Chabot). Think about what services we can offer employees by leveraging AI and robotics (e.g., travel booking)? With your prioritised pain points as well as your industry research firmly in place, explore the tech-driven tools that will help you address your issues, bringing your HR department into a prosperous new digital age.

Adapted from

<https://orbium.com/careers/why-hr-shouldnt-be-left-out-when-talking-about-digital-transformation/>

Question: What are the changes to be made to the workplace to better accommodate the pandemic needs?

Changes to office designs, the need for greater collaborative work and distributed team interaction, including systems and tools, as well as remote work guidelines that also involve health and safety. Tools required: Working with the business and IT to confirm employees have the capabilities to work from home.

DURING PANDEMIC

During Pandemic: People Practices Review

HR Operations & Technology

Question: IT Infrastructure investing in the age of covid-19 and why is this important for Companies?

With almost a quarter of the world's population in lockdown and mass working from home, there is pressure on digital infrastructure since there is an incredible degree of reliance on network capacity and resiliency. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic requires secure vital services, networks and capabilities. The lockdown forces companies to change the way of working and it is important that we consider if existing infrastructure can cope.

Investing in essential Infrastructure is what seems certain in the COVID-19 pandemic. The Singapore government has allocated more than S\$500 million to support businesses in their digital transformation. Companies that are behind in their digital journey should tap on these grants as much as possible.

Companies should also bear in mind that the risk of malicious attacks also increases as cybercriminals are seeking to exploit the current situation. Business leaders have a heightened responsibility to set clear expectations about how their organisations are managing security risk in the new work environments, leveraging new policies and technologies and empowering their employees.

Examples of some guidance that could be provided to employees

Maintain good password hygiene

Employees should use complex passwords and multifactor authentication where possible and change these passwords frequently.

Update systems and software

Individuals should install updates and patches in a timely manner, including on mobile devices and any other non-corporate devices they might use for work.

Secure your WIFI access point

Employees should change their default settings and passwords in order to reduce the potential impact on their work of an attack via other connected devices.

Use a virtual private network (VPN)

VPNs can help create a trusted connection between employees and their organisations and ensure ongoing access to corporate tools. Corporate VPNs provide additional protection against phishing and malware attacks, the same way corporate firewalls do in the office.

POST PANDEMIC

Post Pandemic: Return to Workplace Plan

When the economy reopens after a lockdown / movement control, we are entering the “recovery” phase of the pandemic. Businesses should look at putting in place Return to Work plans carefully as well as to enable itself to move swiftly with a well thought through re-exit plans.

Question: As the pandemic enters recovery phase, what can HR do to support the business with the pandemic recovery?

As we enter into recovery, HR should ensure all processes and policies put in place from the onset are revisited and reviewed. This would help to map out the process flow on how the business will normalise back to a normal operating rhythm once crisis is over.

HR should encourage a balanced view between the business and the needs of the people when formulating a sustainable return plan. Although we are planning towards a normal operating state, to some this may seem like a change and therefore ensuring that there is enough communication and engagement activities for change management would allow for better support for businesses and employees during this challenging time.

Question: What should HR consider when formulating a return to work plan?

HR's role in the organisation's return-to-workplace debate is to advocate for health and safety while deciding when and who to return, and what the experience will be like. Every organisation has unique scenarios for returning employees to the workplace as the phases of the pandemic unfold, but HR's role is constant: To advocate for the health and safety of employees and, in turn, for the consumers and other stakeholders with whom they come in contact.

It is not enough just to establish safety measures; employees must feel safe. For the HR leaders engaged in return-to-workplace decisions, the focus on employee health, welfare and safety requires flexibility and empathy and a willingness to regroup and retrace back-to-work decisions as circumstances change.



MNC

Multinational Corporation

Different countries will have a different readiness to return to work and sometimes there may be a cultural element that needs to be considered. For example, Japan's work culture demands constant face-to-face interaction, partly to show respect. Should the company remove work from home as a default and allow flexibility, employees in Japan may feel obliged to come into the office if their managers are doing so.

Make sure you have a “re-exit” plan

Employees need to feel confident that you have a plan should a new surge in coronavirus infections occur. Make clear what the triggers and responses will be and predicate those plans on a continual (re)evaluation of different workplace scenarios.

Be certain employees will feel safe.

It is not enough just to establish safety measures; employees must feel safe. Be transparent and specific about your plans so employees understand the measures and perceive them to be safe. Commit to training on specific safety measures if required.

Wait until your employees are ready.

If employees are unwilling or unable to return to the workplace, don't force them. Gather data to assess employee sentiment and comfort about returning and continue to monitor employee engagement and comfort once they do return. Adjust the reentry plan if needed. Use employee feedback as a trigger for re-exit if employees start to feel unsafe.

POST PANDEMIC

Post Pandemic: Return to Workplace Plan

Question: What areas to review in a Return to Work plan?

Define near- to mid-term roadmap to restore sustainable workplace operations. Refer to what we have shared on the areas for review for During Pandemic and consider those aspects and prepare for the Return to Work.

Essentially, review the following aspects: -

1. Facilities / Workplace Preparation

Prepare the workplaces for social distancing and ensure all other necessary health & safety measures are in place (please also follow local government regulations). Always ensure that the workplace is safe for employees to return to work. Schedule thorough cleaning before employees return. Thereafter, ensure that capabilities to continue the cleaning regime is present. Temperature checks mechanisms, PPEs, workplace setup for social distancing and meeting rooms' setup are all key areas to review.

Review the work arrangements for all employee groups and consider how to structure the return to work plan. Avoid having all employees to return to office at once, look at a staggered return plan for business sustainability. Carefully review the local legislation on the guidance and requirements for return. For instance, if it is still mandatory for all employees who can work from home to continue doing so, review the needs for employees to report back to office.

2. Return to Office Plan by Employee Group

3. Set Guiding Principles

Whilst employees may be excited to return to work and managers eagerly calling for face to face meetings, do put in place a set of guiding principles to remind all employees of the situation. Look at having a People First safety concept and do not rush. Reach out to all employees to be sensible when making the return plans.

Send out communication about local Back to Office return plan and policies (including reminder to cough and sneeze etiquettes, need to stay at home with mild symptoms, recommendation to avoid public transport if possible, etc.). Regularly update employees regarding changes if any. Remember to tap on all suitable communication channels, e.g. emails, posters, notice boards. Encourage 2-way communication to manage any issues on the ground and to ensure understanding of the company's approach. Work on Employee engagement. During this time, it is also good to engage your people managers, providing them with leadership tips to handle the situation and any emotions / pushback that may be received.

4. Ensure Proper Communication

POST PANDEMIC

Post Pandemic: Return to Workplace Plan

5. Put in Proper Controls and Records

Review the local legislation requirements and determine what records need to be in place. E.g. twice daily temperature check records contact tracing for suspect / confirm case internally, employees listing and respective work arrangements.

Build in regular reviews to determine if the return plan is successful. Consider the key metrics (both business and people target) and measure them to evaluate the effectiveness.

6. Plan Reviews

Question: Why a staggered Return to Work plan?

Staggered increase of employee numbers over a period limits health risk exposure. This allows a controlled scale up of the operations and ensure proper safety measures are in place. Staggered return arrangement also allows adaptations to be carried out if needed, in case there need to be recalibration to the plans.

Question: How do I determine which group of employees to return?

Identify the various categories of workers:

- Those who can and continue to work remotely
- Non-remote workers who can work remotely with proper support
- Those who can no longer work for a variety of reasons
- Those who continue to work in person
- Groups with major medical concerns

Sequence the return by different employee group

With the segregation of employees according to their roles, activities and skill sets and their ability to work remotely, consider which group needs to return to work. Add insights from recent experience with remote work to determine which segments have been able to adjust quickly and remain productive remotely. Then sequence the return accordingly but be flexible to employee needs.

Decide based on the work, not the worker

When determining if the employees need to return to work, look at consistency across the employee group and not by individual staff.

Determine needs for return to work onsite

Where employees are remaining productive remotely with no impact to the roles and output, require managers to make the business case for returning employees to an on-site location.

Be flexible, putting in place well-informed guidelines rather than rigid mandates will ease stress on employees.

Question: Who should develop the staggered return plan?

Return plan should be developed on local level with consultation with the business stakeholders. There need to be adherence to the local legislations and hence is important to keep tab on all legislative requirements. Consider safety aspects when formulating the return plans and balance it with the business requirements. At times, HR will need to take a step forward to further explore with business stakeholders on the absolute for employees to return. As far as possible, the practice should be applied consistently across departments but there need to be consideration on the functional particularities.

POST PANDEMIC

Post Pandemic: Return to Workplace Plan

Question: How should a staggered return plan look like?

The staggered return plan will also take into consideration as well different employee groups (e.g. Risk groups, functionality for working from home). The plan should define time periods for each phase, intended number or % of employees per phase, selection criteria and ramp up approach (e.g. daily / weekly rotation of employees of respective phase).

	Phase 0	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
	Preparations	Staggered Return	Staggered Return	New Normal
Company Requirements	Preparing workplaces Social distancing preparation Staggered return plan developed Prepare and send out communication	Social distancing and use of PPE implemented Encourage working from home, but begin staggered return to workplace Rotate employees if needed (daily / weekly) No risk groups in the offices Continue comms. to employees, focus on engagement	Social distancing and use of PPE Descale working from home, up scale return to workplace Rotate employees if needed (daily / weekly) Continue comms. to employees, focus on engagement	Social distancing as a new normal Risk groups back to work based on company doctor or private doctor having no major concerns Staggered working time startshifting to regular schedule Continue comms. to employees, focus on engagement
Country Regulations	Health & Safety COVID-19 standards/laws published by the government to be observed and followed at all times			

Question: What can HR do to manage the return-to-workplace experience?

Employee experience and safety come first

It is not only humane to make sure employees feel safe and supported, it is also critical to business continuity and success. Create new “employee journey maps” to effectively manage the return-to-workplace experience. Identify and manage the moments that matter most to employees upon reentry into the workplace, such as their first day back and their first team meeting.

Communicate candidly about the risks

The perception of safety is as important as safety itself. Be as transparent as possible with employees about any changes in the risk of transmission. Consider a simple communication tool such as a green / yellow / red rating to communicate the risk of exposure to coronavirus at a given facility on a given day.

Acknowledge the non-work stress on employees

Employee experience extends beyond a physical location. Employees may still find it hard to commute, secure childcare and manage the continued disruptions in their daily lives. These stresses will reduce their productivity at work. Learn from the way personal and work lives have blurred during the pandemic. Invite employees to share specifics of their situation and equip managers to respond. Create consistent messaging around coping strategies.

Question: What engagement ideas can HR put in place?

Say THANK YOU to all your employees, show that the organisation appreciates and recognises their work. Communicate some of the fantastic stories that were happening during the pandemic crisis. It is also ideal to put in place a survey after the office reopens and return to new normal. This will help HR hear the employees' voice and new engagement ideas can arise.

POST PANDEMIC

Post Pandemic: Lesson Learnt & Looking to the Future

Question: How to manage resilience and mental wellness?

As we have seen, the pandemic is a disruption faced by employees and business alike. It is a long journey and it takes resilience to overcome the challenges. This is especially so if an employee is faced with issues around many aspects of his / her day to day life. Should there be uncertainty, employees will also feel tremendous stress and thereby impact their mental health. These may be felt throughout the pandemic. During the post pandemic for instance, employees may also feel pressured by the return to work plan as there may be concern and worry about contracting the virus since they need to be out at the workplace and public transportation. Therefore, as a responsible employer, plans need to be mapped out in a way that these challenges are considered and look at how our employees can be better supported. Build in communication plans and allow the employees to voice their concerns. Some initiatives can be considered to support employees: -

- Frequent video conferencing sessions for interaction within team
- Engagement sessions such as appreciation activities, townhall, team briefs, casual team meet ups with games, remote workout sessions, health talks
- Share contact points for support (internal as well as external hotlines)

Question: How to manage change during the pandemic?

Throughout this playbook, we have seen how much changes are presented in the situation, way of working and living, people's expectations and needs. Therefore, change management techniques are important to ensure that there is a smooth transition and people are well supported. In these challenging times, there is also a need to build in sensitivity and empathy when making decisions and responding to the situation. As shared on the importance of communication, it is critical for business leaders to be genuine in providing clear and transparent messages over suitable mediums. Share business plans, current business performance and challenges to your employees. Besides telling the What and How, also focus on the Why for better understanding and buy in. Organisations also must adopt an agile mentality as nothing is constant. Do not be afraid to evaluate and calibrate more frequently than before. Ask probing questions on what we can do better. Look out for data trends and perform analysis in the various areas so that proactive plans can also be devised. In addition, as we have experienced, the pandemic may not be just a 100-metre dash race. Besides the need to have ability to respond fast, organisations will also have to keep the energy to ensure that efforts are sustainable. Also look at how our employees can be supported so that they are able to work with the business to ride out of the crisis.

Question: What is the new normal and how should HR deal with the new way of working?

The change in social norms such as social distancing and mandate for remote work will affect how businesses and HR operate. As the situation constantly evolves, there may not be a new normal setting that is fixed in the short run. Therefore, evaluate the environment with an open mindset and never be afraid to revisit plans and try out new things. Many discussions have taken place to deliberate on what's the new normal. It may be a world of remote workforce that is not limited by the work location, a workforce that needs to be constantly engaged with health and wellness topics as key engagement agenda, people processes that extensively tap on technology whilst building in human touch and so on. HR can deal with the new norms by always keeping tab on the ongoing, leverage on data and employees' feedback and keep the people processes relevant. IHRP has developed a set of Advanced Toolkits to help you navigate the situation.

[Click here](#) for Additional Resource – HR tool kits strategies for the new normal.

Afterword

The team has taken a ground perspective when putting this playbook together. The question and answer model have also been considered so that any HR practitioners facing a situation is able to zoom in and pick up a relevant response quickly. To this point, we hope that the contents have been helpful to support you in the thought process whilst putting together a plan to navigate the pandemic.

As we have seen, the Global Pandemic is a challenging situation that stretches over a long period of time. Therefore, any decisions made need to consider both the long- and short-term impact to the business. Whilst the business climate is difficult, HR professionals should work hand in hand with business leaders to do what is right for both the people and the business. This mindset will help the business ride through the waves in time to come. Short term benefits may come easier, from various cost cutting measures. However, we are all aware of the implications that these decisions may bring if not properly considered and hence cost cutting measures impacting people should always come as a last resort. As a business partner, consider ideas beyond pure costs cutting measures, for instance increasing productivity, expanding revenue streams or better ring fence our customers.

Whilst devising the plans and programs for your company, always take into consideration the uniqueness of your business. Having a good understanding of the business and a heart for the People is key for HR Professionals to ride through the wave. Develop an awareness of the business's risk and stakeholder's assessment so that we are able to better advise the business. A programme that works wonders for 1 organisation may not achieve the same deliverables in another. There could also be restrictions that your firm may face and is hence unable to adopt the recommended approach mentioned, e.g. providing incentives, setting up of a separate job role to monitor the pandemic requirements. Do not worry should you find yourself in these situations. With the right mindset and skillset, you will be able take reference of what have been shared and put together a plan that works for your organisation.

Looking forward, it is envisaged that many changes will continue to evolve. Let's take a continuous improvement mindset when reviewing our people practices. As we have seen, businesses are looking at incorporating technology and data into HR practices with a human touch. This trend will continue. Adding on to this, the pandemic has also heightened the focus on employees' health and wellbeing. Continue to review into these areas to stay ahead. IHRP has a COVID Advance Team looking these topics and you can reference to their work [here](#).

Let us not wait for what is to be the new norm and thereafter put up a reactive plan. It is time for all HR Professionals to really look forward, initiate and take this pandemic as a time for mindset change and move the people agenda forward. Remain positive and turn the crisis into an opportunity for us to scale greater heights to reinforce on the professionalism of HR in the business environment.

We wish you all the best in the upcoming journey and will be with you as we march to the next epoch.

Together as a community towards a new normal



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Annex

Annex 1 - Crisis Readiness Questionnaire

To ensure employees, shareholders and other stakeholders believe the organisation is prepared to handle a crisis, run through these key questions with your stakeholders.

- Can our company operate with 25% or greater absenteeism?
- If illness causes high absenteeism, are employees cross-trained and able to perform multiple duties?
- Can our employees work remotely?
- What infrastructure support is needed to support a shift to a stay home workforce?
- Will our company monitor, or even restrict, travel to high-risk regions?
- What procedures do we have in place to decontaminate the facility and its heating, ventilation, air-conditioning systems, electronic equipment and soft materials (curtains, etc.)?
- What assurances do we need to provide to the facility staff members, so they feel safe at work?
- How will traveling employees be brought home, particularly if they are sick?
- Are there escalation procedures to get additional resources?
- Is there a trained and representative crisis management team that includes on-call staff, and do those team members know what is expected of them?

Annex

Annex 2 - Corporate Crisis Management Team Checklist

S/N	Checkpoints	
1	Review organisation's stakeholder analysis - Ensure all groups identified along with risks and opportunities	
2	Identify team members and assign responsibilities Critical roles: - Country Head / Lead Business Leaders HR Finance Facilities and Safety Communications	
3	Setup and agree on frequency of discussion. Take minutes for discussion.	
4	Ensure documents are kept in shared folder for easy reference.	
5	Leverage on global team for references, e.g. travel restriction management, repatriation of foreigners.	
6	Brainstorm possible scenarios and discuss local policies accordingly.	
7	Regular communications to key stakeholder groups to be in place.	
8	Adopt agility mindset.	

Annex

Annex 3 - Emergency Scenarios Planning Checklist

IT		
Questions to Consider	Potential Risk to Company	Risk Mitigation Steps
Is your organisation capable of working remotely? Will they be able to continue to collaborate remotely?		
Do our employees have the hardware and software required to achieve this? Are they encrypted?		
Have you got secure networks that allow a flexible and secure working environment?		
Have you tested your IT infrastructure to support a flexible and potentially remote working environment?		
Have you considered the security implications of a flexible working environment?		
Do you have a Business Continuity Plan and an Incident Response Plan? Have you tested them?		
How will your employees deal with IT or systems issues when working remotely? Do they have an updated communications plan and process to address this?		
Have you spoken to your outsourced IT vendors, managed service providers and other relevant third parties regarding their readiness and availability about the potential impact from Covid19?		

GOVERNANCE		
Questions to Consider	Potential Risk to Company	Risk Mitigation Steps
What are your current messages to the business regarding their preparation, management and response to the pandemic?		
Do you have a contingency plan for those who may fall ill at your workplace?		
Who are the key people that can decide to continue operations?		
Are you documenting regular board meeting minutes regarding decisions, with evidence of decisions?		
Have there been changes in your organisation's risk profile? Have you reviewed your risk profile and developed an action plan to record, address, mitigate and manage the risk?		
What impact will the pandemic have on your insurance policies?		
Who else needs to be notified – who are the key stakeholders that are affected?		

Annex

Annex 3 - Emergency Scenarios Planning Checklist

STAFF		
Questions to Consider	Potential Risk to Company	Risk Mitigation Steps
Have you enacted basic sanitation procedures such as hand and respiratory hygiene information at the entrance to your workplace, and in highly visible internal work areas? Does this information include instructions about self-quarantine if a team member is unwell?		
Has any e-communication about quarantine expectations been distributed? Does this information include criteria, duration and return to work procedures?		
Do your team members know how you will manage different scenarios during their time off in quarantine? For example, when they are sick, not sick but are not able to work, able to work from home?		
What is your current employee situation in terms of levels of resource and capability? Do you have a plan in place to maintain operations if a portion of the employees are quarantined – either self-imposed or mandatory?		
Are you monitoring the Ministry of Health's website for updates and are you sharing relevant information with your employees?		
If your employees are required to travel, can these instructions be managed through alternative means such as video conferencing?		
Are you currently monitoring your employees' leave balances? What is your ability to fund extended leave periods?		
Have you checked your contractual obligations with your employees against your organisation's leave policy? Have you considered potential and temporary changes to these policies?		
If key staff and/or contractors become ill, will this have a major impact on your operations? Is there a succession plan in place for these roles? For example, this could include handover instructions, system/process training required in advance etc.		
If your business can operate remotely, are there processes and procedures in place to ensure quality is maintained and operations can continue?		
Are there any roles you have identified which cannot be performed remotely? Have you considered any health & safety implications of working remotely; for example, the availability of IT equipment, suitable home office space etc.		
Are there any roles you have identified whose scope of work may need to be amended? What new job scope can they be offered? What would their performance measurements be based on?		
Have you drafted a communication plan for employees, clients, suppliers and other key stakeholders in the event of a mandatory closedown?		
How will you manage recruitment, exit and onboarding process?		

<https://www.grantthornton.sg/globalassets/1.-member-firms/singapore/pdf-articles/covid-19-business-checklist-singapore.pdf>)

Annex

Annex 4 - Frequently Asked Questions HR Should Establish for Employees

I. Travel Policy, Events and Meetings

1. What are the current travel restrictions?

Business trips are to be reduced to the absolute minimum. This regulation also applies to sales and field staff. Only in rare, urgent and exceptional cases and only after prior approval by the respective manager will exceptions from this directive be granted. Comparable level approval is acceptable where appropriate (country head). Supervisors must obtain confirmation of all exceptions from Corporate Security. We are closely monitoring the situation and will adjust the current measures based on upcoming developments.

You can find all local hotline numbers to answer any of your questions above.

2. What should I do as an employee if I notice flu-like symptoms?

In accordance with our duty of care as an employer, we strongly recommend that you inform your responsible general practitioner and follow the relevant instructions. In addition, please inform your line manager immediately (duty of disclosure). In accordance with your duty as an employee, we expect you to behave responsibly regarding your own health and ability to work. No matter whether it is the flu or the novel coronavirus - the important thing is that you do not infect other people.

3. What are the quarantine rules for business trips approved as exceptions?

Only in rare, urgent and exceptional cases and only after prior approval by the respective manager will exceptions from the directive above be granted. Comparable level approval is acceptable where appropriate (country head). Supervisors must obtain confirmation of all exceptions from Corporate Security. In the case of a business trip approved as an exceptional case, please observe the instructions for self-quarantine - depending on the risk classification of the country and the country crisis management teams from which you are travelling.

4. Who covers the cost if I cancel a private trip?

Travelers must clarify this with their tour operator. In general, we recommend taking out a travel cancellation insurance.

5. I am planning a private trip to a risk country. What do I have to consider?

In accordance with our duty of care as an employer, we strongly recommend that you refrain from travelling also for private purposes. In accordance with your duty as an employee, we expect you to behave responsibly regarding your ability to work.

6. What is the guideline for meetings and events?

All face-to-face meetings and events should be avoided for the time being. Please use Skype, Teams as virtual alternatives. Our aim is to keep the risk of infection for our employees as low as possible. Urgent face-to-face meetings (essential to maintain production and safety in plants or for legal, regulatory reasons) should be reduced to the actual number of participants / decision-makers required. These decision-makers are advised to communicate the results of the meeting to their colleagues afterwards. The duration of a meeting should also be limited to the necessary minimum. In addition, please observe the general hygiene measures for urgent face-to-face meetings. These include, for example, refraining from direct contact when greeting (e.g. shaking hands), keeping one to two meters distance from colleagues, regularly airing and cleaning the meeting room and thoroughly washing hands before and after the meeting. Any face-to-face meetings other than for decision-making (e.g. informative meetings, regular team and project update meetings, sports events, team events) are to be avoided.

7. Can I plan or participate in meetings and events with external parties?

All face-to-face meetings and events should be avoided for the time being.

Annex

Annex 4 - Frequently Asked Questions HR Should Establish for Employees

8. Where do I get more information? Where do I get information on local developments?

At sites worldwide, employee hotlines are being set up to answer questions about the coronavirus, for example questions on travel guidelines. Callers will also receive information on current local developments and their impact on working conditions at the respective site. Please note that the hotlines cannot provide medical advice. In this regard, please contact your local general practitioner by telephone. You will find the hotline numbers in this document above and further information; these will be updated regularly.

9. I have just come back from a holiday / business trip to one of the affected countries. What should I do?

Please observe the instructions for self-quarantine - depending on the risk classification of the country and the country crisis management teams from which you are travelling.

10. Can I return home if I am currently on an assignment in a high-risk country?

The company is not advising calling back and repatriating our assignees independent of whether on short or long-term assignment considering the following:

COVID-19 is a global pandemic, more and more countries are affected. Every day the number of affected countries and illnesses increase.

Countries are calling back their citizens mainly who are on holiday abroad. e.g. in terms of Singapore the request concerns mainly Singapore citizens on holiday and does not affect foreigners permanently or temporarily living abroad, although this is a personal decision.

Repatriation has a huge business impact.

In very exceptional cases where an employee wishes to return, we will assess on an individual basis:

In case an employee wishes to return to the home country, he / she must address his / her wish to the respective business and decision should be made jointly.

The Global Mobility Team can support with information to the business decision (e.g. actual travel bans and restrictions, assignment related payments regarding Home leave or repatriation, cost of early leave).

11. Can I still participate in training events planned for the months?

No. HR has made the decision to cancel all training events planned for the coming months.

12. What about planned relocations of employees?

Relocations must be postponed. All other moves or relocations will be postponed. Mobility teams will get in contact with the hiring managers.

13. Which rules apply for interviews with external candidates?

All planned interviews with external candidates should either be conducted virtually or postponed to a later date. The preferred option can be chosen by the hiring manager. Only within the upcoming days and weeks there will be more clarity whether in-person interviews can be done again. However, it is likely that this guidance will apply. Should an interview be inevitable then this decision is to be taken by the hiring manager. The external candidate will then be treated according to the external visitor rules.

14. Are new hires allowed to start their job?

This differs from country to country, please adhere to local guidelines or check with the local HR team.

15. Is there a global home office policy in place due to coronavirus?

Working from home is to be mandatorily implemented whenever possible and wherever appropriate. All managers are instructed to develop viable, flexible solutions for their teams. We make specific arrangements for colleagues with specific requirements – be it pre-existing health conditions or childcare obligations in times of schools and childcare facilities being shut down.

Annex

Annex 4 - Frequently Asked Questions HR Should Establish for Employees

16. What shall I do if school or kindergarten gets closed and I must care for my child? Are there any guidelines?

It's in the interest that our employees can balance their work and family commitments. Should the kindergarten/ school be affected by a governmental-ordered closure, due to COVID-19, the following rules apply:

It's the responsibility of the employee to find an alternative childcare solution, for example through our flexible working hours model.

In very exceptional cases (extraordinary measures required, impossible on short notice, non-existing IT infrastructure), the employee may apply for an "emergency leave of absence" of a maximum of two weeks. In this case, please contact your manager and pay close attention to the locally applicable regulations.

17. I am working in production / a laboratory. Does the home office policy also apply to me?

Please contact your manager to evaluate your options regarding working from home, especially if your workplace is not qualified for home-based working flexibility.

18. I have been asked to work from home but do not have the necessary IT infrastructure to do so. Where can I get support?

If your manager has asked you to work from home and you don't have a laptop. Please make sure that you have internet access at your home. Contact IT Service Portal for assistance.

19. When do I need VPN access?

You only need to use a VPN connection to the corporate network to access the company internal systems and resources, such as ERP systems, internal databases. You can use your home internet when working with IT Service Portal, Outlook, MS Teams, Skype, without a VPN connection.

20. How do I connect to the company network?

If you have any issues, please contact the IT Service Desk team.

21. What do I do in case I have connectivity issues?

Please contact the IT Service Desk team.

22. Are we working with our technology partners to ensure their platforms are also prepared for increasing numbers of individuals working from home?

We are in touch with vendors such as Microsoft and they have assured us they are also prepared for the increasing numbers of users working from home and will work with us to help ensure business continuity.

23. What can I do to get the best out of my meetings?

To ensure the best possible meeting experience for all participants please follow the following guidelines.

- Prepare yourself, plan your meeting carefully, make yourself confident with the tool, join on time.
- Reboot your laptop before the meeting.
- Close unneeded applications during the meeting.
- Ensure your mobile device has the latest version.
- Get the latest version of Skype/Teams on your mobile device.
- Ensure you have the best possible Internet connection for your device (4G, WIFI) with the maximum bandwidth.
- Do not move around during the meeting/call with your device.
- Mute your audio when not speaking.
- Disable your Video. Limit screen sharing if possible.
- If possible, use company provided headsets.

Annex

Annex 4 - Frequently Asked Questions HR Should Establish for Employees

II. Compensation

24. Will I get paid if I am in forced quarantine or the site is shut down and I can't work from home (operations, research, logistics etc.)?

If working from "home" is possible, you continue working (from "home") without impact on your routine / salary. If working from "home" is not possible due to the following reasons:

- Lack of technology infrastructure
- The type of work can't be delivered remotely
- Other reasons, local management will communicate further proceedings.

III. Precaution Measures and Medical Coverage

25. What can I do to protect myself from infection at work and at home?

Slowing down a further spread of the coronavirus is now of utmost relevance. To support this global challenge, we have taken the following decisions:

Working from home is to be generally implemented whenever possible and wherever appropriate. All managers are instructed to develop viable, flexible solutions for their teams.

We make specific arrangements for colleagues with specific requirements – be it pre-existing health conditions or childcare obligations in times of schools and childcare facilities being shut down.

Business trips are to be reduced to the absolute minimum. This is not the time to travel any more. Only in rare, urgent and exceptional cases and only after prior approval by the respective manager will exceptions from this directive be granted. Comparable level approval is acceptable where appropriate (country head).

26. Do the medical insurance benefits for employees cover cases of Corona infections in all the affected countries?

Yes, the company does cater for appropriate medical coverage. Either by the already existing, voluntarily taken out medical insurance or the respective social security system in place.

27. Does the company cover the costs of a voluntary corona test (1st/2nd contact person) to enable a quick return to work?

No, the company does not cover the costs of voluntary COVID 19 tests.

IV. Business continuity

28. What is the company doing to ensure business continuity in the affected regions?

In the context of increasing concerns around the coronavirus epidemic, we aim to protect the health and safety of our employees worldwide in close collaboration with global institutions and local health authorities. In parallel, we need to ensure business continuity, as well as the timely supply of essential services while optimally serving our customers worldwide. Additionally, we make specific arrangements for colleagues with specific requirements – be it pre-existing health conditions or childcare obligations in times of schools and childcare facilities being shut down. A global crisis team to provide ongoing assessment of the situation as well as provide recommendations and active support across all sites. The head of the individual business is accountable to ensure business continuity while protecting the health and safety of their employees in their location.

29. Does the outbreak of the coronavirus disease already affect our business?

Of course, the potential impact of the current coronavirus epidemic on the general economic development and on business is difficult to determine now. We developed several scenarios. All in all, we expect a negative effect on our sales. If the crisis grows or triggers a global recession, we would of course have to adapt our business forecast.

30. What about our global supply chains?

Securing access to our supplies and serving our customers is our priority. Therefore, we are continuously monitoring our global supply chains to minimize the potential impact for customers.

Annex

Annex 5 – Communication Templates

Internal Communication

Confirmed Case of COVID-19 at xxx Office

Dear Colleagues,

We would like to inform you that one of our colleagues working at xxx office has been confirmed for COVID-19 infection on dd/mth/yyyy.

This colleague developed mild symptoms on dd/mth/yyyy, last Tuesday, and has not reported for work since last Wednesday. We are providing assistance to the affected staff and the staff's family in this time of need.

As the well-being of our employees is our utmost priority, we have taken extensive precautionary measures to mitigate any potential risk. Upon learning of the possibility of the employee being infected, the xxx office was closed for thorough disinfection on dd/mth/yyyy and will remain closed until end of the week, dd/mth/yyyy.

All office employees have been asked to work from home during this period.

All colleagues who were in close contact with the said colleague have been granted Leave of Absence until contact tracing is complete. Per guidelines, close contact is defined as being within 2m proximity over 30 mins or more. All office floors as well as common areas, including high-touch areas, corridors, lift cars, lift lobby and washrooms that were frequented by the staff have undergone deep cleaning and sanitization.

xxx office will re-open on dd/mth/yyyy, Monday. However, all employees are strongly encouraged to continue working from home if practicable.

All staff are reminded to monitor your health closely. If you experience symptoms such as fever and or coughing, sore throat or shortness of breath, please wear a mask and seek medical advice.

Thank you for playing your part in protecting yourselves and our colleagues.

Annex

Annex 5 – Communication Templates

Template for Confirmed Case (Sample #2)

Internal Communication

We learned [today] that one of our employees has tested positive for/contracted the novel coronavirus, COVID-19.

What we know

[Identify the area(s) where and the date(s) when the employee frequently worked].

[Identify date the employee last entered the premise]

Ongoing preventative measures

The facilities team have arranged for a contractor to carry out disinfection cleaning in the office on [DATE]. The office will be closed on [START DATE – END DATE].

All [LOCATION] employees with remote work capabilities are expected to work from home while the office is closed. Each employee should consult with their manager for additional instructions.

We cannot identify the employee who tested positive for the virus because of privacy laws. However, we have gathered the names of those employees that worked in close proximity (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) during the 48 hours prior to infected employee showing symptoms. Those employees should first consult and follow the advice of their healthcare providers or public health department regarding the length of time to stay at home. If those resources are not available, the employees should remain at home for 14 days after last exposure. If they develop symptoms, they should remain home for at least ten days from the initial onset of the symptoms, and three days without a fever (achieved without medication) and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath).

If an employee or their family members were to develop symptoms associated with COVID-19 the MOH has an online tool available. The [Singapore COVID-19 Symptom Checker](#) is an information resource website for Singapore residents that will suggest preferred care options based on their age, recent travel history, people they may have been exposed to, and the symptoms they might be having. The website does not collect personally identifiable data. If your symptoms including, please contact your medical provider, and do not come to work. Notify [INSERT COMPANY CONTACT] as soon as possible.

The health and well-being of our employees is our priority.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact [INSERT COMPANY CONTACT]. You may also check the COVID-19 website for additional information.

Template for Confirmed Case

External Communication (For reactive use if required only)

“The safety of our employees and customers is paramount. Working closely with the health authorities, any staff member who has been in close contact with the employee has been notified and asked to work from home until contact tracing is complete. We have also stepped up our precautionary measures including closing our facility for deep cleaning and ensuring face masks and hand sanitizers are available on-site. These measures are designed to protect our staff, the public, our customers and our continued operations. Out of respect for employee privacy, please understand that we are unable to provide further details on individual cases.”

Annex

Annex 5 – Communication Templates

Communication Checklist

S/N	Checkpoints	
1	Review communication needs for all stakeholder groups across the various phases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Type of message - Communication needs - Areas of concerns - Communication Channel (face to face, written, social media) - Communication Mode (Language, infogram vs written) 	
2	Set timelines and review frequency of communication	
3	Ensure stakeholders are involved for better buy in and support	
4	Create template for reactive statements	
5	Develop FAQ for employees	
6	Facilitate 2-way communication	
7	Look at positive reinforcement from time to time	
8	Build in review process	

Annex

Annex 6 – Business Continuity Planning Checklist

Planning Activities

Not Started ✓	Underway ✓	Complete ✓	Item	Action taken
			1.1 Assign responsibility for planning and preparedness to a senior executive and a deputy	
			1.2 Obtain information on COVID-19	
			1.3 Consult within the company, with workers and worker representatives	
			1.4 Consult with suppliers on measures they are taking and on potential disruptions to supply chains	
			1.5 Assess 'high level' impact on your business and attach appropriate priority to the planning process	
			1.6 Develop a business continuity plan	
			1.7 Establish authorities, triggers and procedures for implementing plan	
			1.8 Test the plan in exercises	
			1.9 Share best practice with other businesses	
			1.10 Revisit plan periodically	

Annex

Annex 6 – Business Continuity Planning Checklist

Measures to Underpin Continuity

Not Started ✓	Underway ✓	Complete ✓	Item	Action taken
			3.1 Nominate deputies	
			3.2 Cross-train, and identify alternative sources of labour	
			3.3 Communicate with staff in a manner appropriate to the current state of COVID-19 phase as guided by national recommendations	
			3.4 Prepare emergency communications plan	
			3.5 Plan for increased take-up of employee welfare services	
			3.6 Prepare policies on sick leave and compassionate leave due to COVID-19	
			3.7 Prepare policies on foreign travel during COVID- 19 event	
			3.8 Plan for the needs of staff overseas	
			3.9 Make arrangements to assure supplies during the COVID-19 event	
			3.10 Consider the possibility of changes to your product, your service, or your interaction with customers, due to COVID-19, and plan for any changes you consider appropriate	
			3.11 Review insurance coverage	

Annex

Annex 6 – Business Continuity Planning Checklist

Responding to Workplace Risks due to Covid19

Not Started ✓	Underway ✓	Complete ✓	Item	Action taken
			4.1 Prepare policies on hygienic behaviour for employees and visitors to premises as guided by national recommendations. Adhere to respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene policies.	
			4.2 Plan to provide for hand washing, hand hygiene, tissue disposal and other facilities as per national recommendations	
			4.3 Plan for frequent and effective cleaning of the workplace as per national recommendations	
			4.4 Prepare policies as per national recommendations to advise those who are infected, or are suspected to be infected with COVID-19	
			4.5 Plan measures to reduce face-to-face contact with customers / suppliers and between employees from different sites	
			4.6 Identify work organisation measures that can be taken to reduce potential for employees who are in the workplace to infect each other	
			4.7 Prepare policies on flexible work locations (e.g. teleworking) and flexible working times (e.g. shiftworking)	
			4.8 Provide ICT infrastructure to support teleworking and remote customer interaction	

Signed
(Executive Responsible)

Annex

Annex 7 – Facilities Considerations Checklist

Source: Aon COVID-19 Response Planning Preparedness Considerations

Security control

- Do you have someone monitoring the movement of people in and out of the facility?
- Do you have alert and alarm procedure and protocols in place?
- What is the procedure for escalating of alarm and alert levels?
- Have you considered how you will limit access to the facility or prevent unauthorized entry? (Specific to Covid19, emergency warning signs of the virus can appear 2 – 14 days after exposure)
- Have you modified receiving practices to eliminate contact with mailman, UPS, couriers, or delivery truck drivers?

Deliveries

- Have you made arrangements for
 - Janitorial services
 - Cleaning procedures
 - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
 - Disinfectants

Visitor / Vendor Screening

- Have you set up protocols for visitor/vendor screening
 - When do you restrict?
 - How do you restrict?
 - What are the exceptions?
 - Who can authorize the restrictions?

Enhanced Security Operations

- Have you considered the following points for your facility and what plans you might like to put in place (if applicable)?
 - Shortages in critical supplies will necessitate security to protect critical assets
 - The available workforce of security guards will be reduced because of the pandemic
 - Social disruption may occur, increasing the likelihood of public panic and disorder
 - Security policies will need to consider alternative work sites
 - Some facilities may need to be vacated for periods of time; security for these sites may be necessary
 - Evaluate existing security systems, resources for the pandemic
 - Workers will need training in any new work practices or PPE use
 - Educate employees on the role of each essential facility in case of closure
 - Develop procedures for securing buildings, protecting stored supplies, and restricting access
 - Create lock-down procedures for buildings to be closed

Annex

Annex 7 – Facilities Considerations Checklist

Source: Aon COVID-19 Response Planning Preparedness Considerations

Increase Hygiene Management

- Have you promoted good hygiene practices to employees?
- Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
- Frequent hand washing for at least 20 seconds each time
- Possible use of gloves

Temporary Provisions

- Depending on the nature of work, the following are some temporary provisions to consider for your facility:
- Gloves – be mindful of allergic reactions to latex; offer vinyl gloves as an option too
- Cleaning material
- Eye protection
- Gowns
- Aprons
- PPE

The following are some pointers to note:

- Modify janitorial practices to include sanitation of frequently touched items, possible use of antiviral sprays or products. Influenza virus may live for several days on hard surfaces.
- Increased frequency in cleaning schedule to clear increased amount of trash
- Training
- Cleaning procedure review
- Disinfectants re-evaluated

Plan for Social Distancing

As you plan for social distancing, have you considered/done the following:

- Develop workspace separations, or cut-off space within the work setting. Protective barriers can be done with something as simple as plastic sheets, or more substantial barriers. The recommended distance between people, according to the CDC, is at least 6 ft. away.
- Area, space planning ahead
- Cut-offs and separation
- Isolation and quarantine area
- Barrier for employees with public face-to-face encounter
 - Reception desks
 - Counters
 - Service line – cafeteria
- Protective barrier types identified for each area and plan for equipment and supply needed:
 - Temporary
 - Permanent

Annex

Annex 7 – Facilities Considerations Checklist

Source: Aon COVID-19 Response Planning Preparedness Considerations

The business can utilize the following additional social distancing strategies to reduce close contact among individuals:

Telecommuting

- Identify the number of employees who have the technological capability and can therefore adequately perform their primary functions remotely.

Teleconferences

- Confirm if virtual meetings over the internet is an effective way to communicate.

Staggering Work Shifts

- Determine the number of employees who do not need to perform their work during the same time of the day and can be spread out over 24 hours.
- The number of employees who can work an extended number of hours in fewer days are [insert number].

Face-To-Face Barriers

- The number of employees who have regular face-to-face contact with the public that can provide services behind a barrier, by telephone, etc. is [insert number].
- Services that can be re-organized to be provided to the public without face-to-face contact are [insert number and type of service].
- Systems that can be put in place to minimize direct face-to-face contact with the public are [insert systems].

Alternative Facilities

- Business may choose to make its alternative facilities, along with other locations, available to implement social distancing.
- Position or designee shall determine which essential functions/services can be conducted from a remote location and those that must be performed at [Business] facility.

Annex 8 – Case Studies on “How HR Responds”

1. HRP Fast Response SWAT Team Case Studies
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1snRdYP_hjTSYMZxgT3A4IKINphaF6i7G?usp=sharing
2. COVID-19: HR Responds Six HR leaders share how they are managing through a global crisis.
<https://www.hrotoday.com/workforce-management/covid-19-hr-responds/>
3. Here' Here's how every major workforce has been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic
<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/13/workforce-wire-coronavirus-heres-what-every-major-company-is-doing-about-the-pandemic.html>
4. Coronavirus: How Employers Around the Globe Are Responding <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-news/pages/coronavirus-how-employers-around-the-globe-are-responding.aspx>
5. Supporting Singapore's Workers During the Pandemic <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/global-hr/pages/coronavirus-singapore-employee-engagement.aspx>

Annex

Annex 9 – Tips for Virtual Interviews



Tips for virtual interviews



1. Create a process on how to prepare for virtual interview and communicate to teammates and hiring managers

- Ensure that teammates and hiring manager understand the process, the role and questions to be asked and assess during virtual interview
- Communicate to everyone involved in the interview on documents expected to be submitted after the interview
- Provide step-by-step guide on how to use video conferencing platforms

2. Conduct a test run on the video conferencing tool before conducting the interview

- To minimize technical issues and create a positive candidate experience, a test run on the video conferencing tool is recommended
- Orientate the hiring manager to ensure that they are aware on how to use basic function
- Find a place that has adequate Wi-Fi signal to conduct interview seamlessly.
- Familiarize yourself on more advanced functions if required during interview.

3. Inform candidates on the required information to make them feel at ease

- Let candidates know that company is conducting interview via video conferencing system and notify the reason
- Run through details of the interview and interviewers that they will be meeting
- Provide instructions on how to access the virtual interview
- Let candidates know if there are any assessments to be expected during interview process
- Provide a contact number in case they encounter technical issues.

4. Choose a conducive place to conduct virtual interview

- Pick a quiet spot that is clean and free of distraction so that candidates can hear interviewers clearly.
- Ensure that the spot selected has adequate Wi-Fi
- Find a well-lit room so that candidates can see the interviewers clearly.

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Tips for virtual interviews



5. Give a persuasive company pitch to persuade candidate company's differentiating factor to join the company

- Candidates do not have the luxury now to walk around and observe the office space or company culture
- Interviewers can prepare online materials to give a short company pitch to let candidates know more about the company. (e.g. Ppt slides or animated videos, social media post, employee testimonials)

6. Be professional, look professional

- Dress professionally
- Ensure that mobile devices are on silent mode
- Read through candidate resume and prepare interview questions beforehand
- Prepare interview assessment forms and materials to note down feedback for submission.
- Smile and maintain eye contact
- Speak clearly and respond accordingly
- Mute the microphone when others are speaking.
- Enable security function and lock meeting room once all the invited participants attend the virtual platform.

7. Be understanding and patient towards candidates

- Interviewers are advised to be more compassionate and thoughtful towards candidates
- They are facing the same issues just like any other colleagues who are working from home
- If interview is disrupted due to unforeseen circumstances, do not penalize them

8. Send a thank you note and a request for feedback

- Follow up with a thank you note to candidate for their interest in the role and giving valuable time to attend the interview
- Solicit for feedback on their interview experience and find out areas of improvement
- Let candidate know the next steps after post interview and what is the expected timeline to know the interview outcome.

Annex

Annex 9 – Tips for Virtual Interviews



Virtual interview checklist



Virtual interview preparation

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inform hiring managers on the interview process and flow | <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule a call to brief candidates of the interview process, instructions to access video conferencing systems and technical support number |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss with hiring manager on criteria to be assessed and feedback documents to be submitted after interview | <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare online materials about company culture, values and other information to brief the candidate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Send calendar invite, documents and video conferencing access link to hiring manager and candidate | <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule a test run of the video conferencing platform with interviewers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Send a step-by-step guide on how to use video conferencing platform to hiring manager | <input type="checkbox"/> Select a quiet and well-lit place with adequate wifi to conduct the interview |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read through the resume and prepare interview questions | <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare professional attire for the virtual interview |



Virtual interview checklist



During the interview

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dress professionally | <input type="checkbox"/> Help candidates feel at ease through ice-breaking questions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that mobile devices are on silent mode | <input type="checkbox"/> Practice active listening and note taking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smile and maintain eye contact | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask open-ended questions or follow up questions to seek clarification |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speak clearly and respond accordingly | <input type="checkbox"/> Echo or paraphrase your understanding on candidate's answer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mute the microphone when others are speaking | <input type="checkbox"/> Give a persuasive pitch on company's culture, values and information to candidate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practice patience and understanding towards the candidates in the case of technical disruption or unforeseen circumstances | <input type="checkbox"/> At the end of the interview, thank and let the candidate know when they will expect the outcome to be announced. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enable security functions and lock meeting room once all participants are in the virtual platform. | |



Virtual interview checklist



Post-interview

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Send candidate a thank you note for their interest in the role and valuable time to attend the interview | <input type="checkbox"/> Seek candidate's feedback on what did not work well throughout the application and interview process |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notify candidates the next steps and expected timeline to be notified of the interview outcome | <input type="checkbox"/> Ask candidates what are the areas or specific actions to improve to enhance the candidate experience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seek candidate's feedback on what works well throughout the application and interview process | <input type="checkbox"/> Study, review and implement follow up action to improve candidate experience |

Reference

Links to other Taskforce team's resources

1. Frequently Asked Questions on Covid-19:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wCjCkWYG43BdYPv8dx7-kMndiU0PxWT/view?usp=sharing>

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DpDmA83vHCwbuEoFO3EP9g_ngoOskMD0/view?usp=sharing

2. Case Studies:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1snRdYP_hjTSYMZxgT3A4IKINphaF6i7G?usp=sharing

3. Resources:

Consolidated resources:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kaoaNBvYLz-EE4C7hgNwWiQ9QYCbJfN/view?usp=sharing>

Restrictions (Quarantine, SHN, Compliance):

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1SMSXtWNw_jMpVkiLYY63vWB5bBnCmfsM?usp=sharing

Immigration and General:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/174_S12lxYyX0Z2o5T-kZeHe5xEfol6Kw?usp=sharing

Foreign Workers' Levy:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Hq0jegCJuNjQTo70vmoH4X732FvH1ko4?usp=sharing>

Foreign Workers' Accommodation:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cy_NOM5W2A2bErfq7YBd2pgV9810vJC9?usp=sharing

Business and People Priorities Toolkit for the New Normal:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uFoJj1jSHWSYIGJciQazGkpTDVPKRrgbG/view?usp=sharing>

People Strategy:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1LniUKR29huotqIbkd4imk9GDTsBq-wNT?usp=sharing>

Wellbeing

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1LniUKR29huotqIbkd4imk9GDTsBq-wNT?usp=sharing>

<https://www.growthbeans.com/wellbeingresources.html>

Generic Resources:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vC96r9FcGIJuuDYI57p44vBizROeVJ8N?usp=sharing>

Reference

Additional Reference links for communications materials

Communication Plans

In times of crisis, what do you need to communicate? And how do you communicate it? Discover more from the following resources on how to get the right message across effectively.

Source gathered from: IHRP

<https://www.ihrp.sg/covid-19-resources/list-of-resources/#1560498631919-3b2c3581-f2d8>

Poppulo

[Employee communications and the coronavirus: What you need to know.](#)

PwC

[COVID-19: Seven steps for effective crisis communication](#)

TheNextWeb

[10 tips to help your business communicate throughout the coronavirus crisis](#)

Hubspot

[6 Crisis Communication Plan Examples & How to Write Your Own \[Template\]](#)

Ogilvy

[COVID-19: How to Communicate in Turbulent Times](#)

Australian Institute of Company Directors

[COVID-19: Effective internal and external crisis communications](#)

A leader's guide: Communicating with teams, stakeholders, and communities during COVID-19

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Google Docs – Crowdsourced resources

[Coronavirus HR Comms & Resources Guide](#)

Workable

[COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) HR action plan email template](#)

SnapComms

[CORONAVIRUS COMMUNICATIONS- Templates and resources to help inform, engage and remind staff](#)

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