Return to the Workplace Checklist

A planning tool for leaders
by
Institute for Corporate Productivity
This checklist is intended to provide you with helpful ideas and reminders of key factors to consider as your organization moves toward re-opening and re-staffing its facilities and workplaces impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list; your organization may have unique needs that require actions that differ from those noted below.
Organizational Facilities

Considerations related to the organization’s properties, buildings, physical workspaces.

**Workplace Safety Policies**
- Functions involved in designing/executing (Security, Safety, Real Estate, HR, etc.)
- Will social distancing be enforced in all interior and exterior spaces on the property? If so, how? Who is responsible? What sort of signage will communicate this?
- Coordination with Security to enforce employee/authorized-only access to properties/buildings

**People Logistics**
- Number of people and configurations permitted:
  - Lines
  - Elevators and stairways
  - Common spaces (hallways, lobbies, parking areas, etc.)
  - Meeting/conference/collaborative areas
  - Cafeterias, break rooms, etc.
  - Outdoor gathering/recreational areas
- Will virtual meetings be used within the workplace to minimize exposure/ensure distancing? If so, are required access/tech/instructions in place?
- Employee health check required for admission to properties/buildings?
  - How will check be accomplished and by whom?
- Will others receive access to buildings/workspaces?
  - Vendors
  - Suppliers
  - Distributors
  - Others
  - Approval process/any limitations
  - How will exposure be limited – equipment cleanliness requirements/personnel health checks?
Organizational **Facilities**  
Considerations related to the organization’s properties, buildings, physical workspaces.

**Cleaning and Maintenance of Properties / Buildings / Workspaces**
- Procedures
- Approved products
- Approved personnel
- Any training required
- Timelines: pre-occupancy, throughout the workday, etc.
- Clean desk policies; employee responsibilities?
- Protective equipment needed for building access and/or occupancy
- Any additional resources required (including staff) to ensure initial and ongoing safe status of properties/buildings/workspaces?

**Additional physical plant / facilities considerations unique to your organization:**

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Organizational Policies

Specifications for necessary actions, changes or other considerations that enable organizational operations.

Policies

- Functions involved in designing/executing policies (Exec Leadership, HR, Total Rewards, etc.)
- Review/update existing policies
- Determine if new policies are needed
  - Scope
  - Content
  - Responsible parties

Major areas of consideration:

- Benefits
- Travel
- Flexible work
- Sick leave
- Childcare
- Eldercare
- Hours of expected work availability
- Performance and productivity measures, expectations, management
- Process to rapidly advance issues, concerns or questions related to return-to-the-workplace plans or operations – how and to whom

Organizational Culture Considerations

- Assess for any changes needed
- Relevant factors to consider if transformation is required
- Timeline
- Responsible parties
- Measures of progress/success

Any other policy issues unique to your organization:

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Organizational Communications

Internal and external interactions to shape messaging and govern flow of information.

- Functions involved in designing / executing communications (Corporate Communications, Executive Leadership, HR, etc.)
- Review/update existing communications policies
- Create any new policies needed

Develop Return-to-Workplace Communications Plan

- Goals (which will shift as situations evolve)
- Audiences
- Timing of communications
- Messaging
  - Content
  - Who will write and approve messages
  - Designated spokespersons
- Channels/media (including organization’s digital and social media presence)
- Two-way capabilities to enable feedback
- External media relations
  - Media access to facilities and/or spokespeople
  - Policies related to employee interaction with the media
- Employee use of social media

Additional communications considerations unique to your organization:

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Organizational Leadership

Considerations and activities of organizational leaders (all relevant levels):

- Functions involved in designing/executing leadership expectations and behaviors (Exec Leadership, HR, Communications, etc.)
- Creation of new/adjusted business plans/models/approaches – current and long-term
- Assess all leaders’ comfort levels in returning to workplace
  - Address any issues, provide support, training or needed resources

Leaders’ Communication responsibilities
- Required/desired timing, content, channels, other relevant logistics
- Reporting – compliance, business status, etc.
- Board
- Employees
- Media
- Other

Leaders’ Roles in engaging / interacting with:
- Employees forced to return to workplace or resistant to doing so
- Employees who want to continue remote work
- Essential employees who have remained onsite and working

- Capabilities to manage virtual work environments/ employees
- Training and development needed to enhance leaders’ capabilities
- Abilities to restructure work to fit new business models, worker locations, etc.
- Evaluate jobs formerly done onsite but now performed remotely – can/should those jobs remain remote?
- Do leaders need to restructure work to better optimize efforts of remote workers and onsite workers?

Additional considerations for leaders unique to your organization:

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Business Operations

Activities required to resume and sustain business operations.

- Functions involved in designing/executing business operations (Executive Leadership, Operations, HR, etc.)
- Confirm compliance with all relevant governmental regulations (federal, state, local) to resume operations
- Timelines: Assess need for phased return to full productivity/output
  - Determine order in which activities should resume
- Physical plants/machinery clean, stocked, ready to power up
- Safety/security issues identified/addressed
- Assess/confirm supply chains and address any related issues
- Assess/confirm distribution capabilities and address any related issues

Assess / Address Customer Readiness

- Needs/capabilities to access products
- Any new capabilities needed to make products/services available online
- Any new capabilities/procedures needed to minimize contact/exposure and assure customers their health/safety will be protected in any interactions with the organization (such as no-contact deliveries, etc.)
- Changes in customer demand
- Economic effects on customer needs/demand/ability to buy
- Communications with customers to ensure continuity, provide updates, explain new procedures, etc.

- Assess economic conditions in all organizational markets
- Review marketing/sales approaches as needed
- Establish data-driven thresholds for suspending operations again in the event of new wave(s) of infections

Other activities required to drive business operations in your organization:
The Organizational **Workforce**  
Considerations related to your organization’s workforce.

- Functions involved in designing/executing people practices (HR, Total Rewards, etc.)
- Do all employees (and relevant contract/freelance or other workers) understand the organization’s return-to-workplace plan?
- Who will return and when:
  - Is return mandatory or voluntary?
  - Will non-compliance by employees (related to return-to-workplace plans) be addressed? If so, how and who will be responsible?

- **Assess / Address Needs of Employees Who Will Continue to Work Remotely**
  - Training and development needed to optimize performance
  - Equipment or other resources needed
  - Any special needs

- **Assess / Address Needs of Employees Who Will Return to Workplaces**
  - Reassurance of precautions to address safety/health
  - Address any questions
  - How will the organization address fear and/or resistance?
  - Transportation needs
  - Scheduling needs
The Organizational Workforce

Considerations related to your organization's workforce.

Assess / Address Needs of Workers Laid off / Terminated/ Downsized, etc.
- Separation/severance
- Unexpected retirements
- Placement assistance
- Communications

Assess / Address Talent Needs to Ensure Appropriate Staffing
(hiring needs if RIF was done, downsizing if demand has decreased, etc.)
- Talent acquisition considerations – outreach, screening, interview/hiring process, onboarding, etc.
- Special talent considerations
  - Specific employee populations
    - Parents with childcare responsibilities
    - Workers with eldercare responsibilities
    - High-risk employees – older workers, those with health conditions, etc.
    - Disabled employees
      - Consideration for heightened health risks?
      - Special transportation needs
      - Workplace accommodations/adaptations needed
  - Other employee groups needing special consideration
  - Assess/address training and development required (for all employees, contractors, freelance workers, etc.) to ensure compliance with new policies and policy/procedure changes
The Organizational Workforce

Considerations related to your organization’s workforce.

Assess / Address Workforce Well-being Issues and Updates to Programs or Benefits Needed

- Physical health precautions
  - COVID-19 testing before entry to workplaces – frequency required
  - Assistance with any health needs
- Ongoing mental health needs
  - Training needed to recognize/act on signs of emotional distress
  - Timely access to counseling, support, or other resources
- Social well-being
  - Leverage ERGs as conduits for communication and support as appropriate
  - Assess/address family needs as appropriate, etc.
- Community well-being
  - Assess status of employees’ volunteerism/community involvement opportunities
  - As needed, update volunteer opportunities to accommodate social distancing or create virtual options for employee participation
- Financial well-being
  - As appropriate, assess/address employee financial issues related to economic fallout of pandemic, loss of wages, delinquent bills, etc.
- Career well-being
  - Assess/address employee concerns about remote work effects on career prospects
  - Ensure clear understanding of any work changes, expectations for performance, etc.
  - Ensure ongoing access to training and development opportunities
  - Re-evaluate internal talent mobility options and restructure as necessary to optimize opportunities and deployments
The Organizational **Workforce**

Considerations related to your organization’s workforce.

- Clearly communicate safety considerations related to employee interactions
  - Personal protective equipment requirements
  - Workspace arrangements to accommodate social distancing
  - Etiquette – handshakes, touching, etc.

- Transportation to and from workplace
  - Is public transit available
  - Will assist be needed?

Additional workforce considerations unique to your organization:

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Other Organizational Stakeholders

- Functions involved in designing/executing business operations (Exec Leadership, Operations, HR, etc.)
- Confirm compliance with all relevant governmental regulations (federal, state, local) to resume operations
- Timelines: Assess need for phased return to full productivity/output

Investors / Potential Investors
- Create and execute proactive communications plans as appropriate – to reassure, keep apprised of performance, continuity, future plans, etc.

Charities / Nonprofits / Philanthropic Activities
- Create and execute plans to maintain contact with non-profits, charities or other entities your organization supports
- Mutually work out any changes necessary to continue providing support or guidance

Communities
- Consider an outside-in approach that begins with an assessment of conditions in each community in which your organization operates, employees live, etc.
- What data will be used to make reopening decisions in each community?
- Health status data (number of new infections by region, acceptable threshold, etc.)
- Assess status of essential services in each of those areas? (Schools and day care operations, capacity and status of health care systems, etc.)
- Consider status of other business organizations in the area (to adjust accordingly or choose to be first to return to workplace)

Additional stakeholders unique to your organization:

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