

Business and Long-Term Planning Considerations

Who, When and How to bring your employees back to work

- Evaluate selection criteria used to choose which employees to return to work
 - Consider surveying employees to gain a true understanding of their questions, fears, concerns and ideas
 - If all employees are not needed initially, will you choose by volunteer, seniority, some other criteria? Flexibility will be important and may protect you in the future.
 - Evaluate accommodations for high-risk employees who request them
 - Make plans of how to treat employees who have child care, elder care, transportation or other obstacles to returning
 - Keep in mind discrimination and bias issues and document objective justifications in support of those decisions.
 - Allow employees to work from home who can do so or request to do so (may be required by state order).
- As you screen employees for return, ensure that privacy is maintained by not asking too detailed questions around individual health concerns.
- If you provide a written policy to employees, you MUST keep it updated
- Consider financial impact to employees already on unemployment if recalled to work under conditions where they cannot return
- Train all supervisors on sensitivity and communications for various scenarios to address appropriately. Make sure supervisors know when to refer to HR.

Business and Long-Term Planning Considerations

Thoughts for the long term

Presently, there is no indication that COVID-19 will be leaving us or be well controlled for months or longer. As the world learns to live and work with its threat, some of the measures employed to reopen businesses now may be in place for the foreseeable future. Consider the following potential impacts to your business:

- Have any measures put in place to support social distancing caused another hazard, such as an employee lifting, twisting or bending more?
- Has shift staggering created or enhanced a repetitive motion hazard?
- Has social distancing disrupted a “buddy system” and caused workers to be alone in an unsafe or less safe situation?
- Over time, do you need to hire to keep up with screening, cleaning or other tasks that have been added to employees’ workloads?

For any changes that become permanent, update job descriptions, process documents, or HazCom resources to remain in compliance.

If future waves affect your business, consider how you will address an infectious employee, how to trace who that employee contacted, and how you will ramp down or close your facility. Each time you close and reopen, resanitize and follow reopening protocols to manage changes that may be needed or circumstances that have changed.

Look back and learn

It is possible, and some health experts say likely, that COVID-19 will have one or more outbreak waves. It is also possible that your business could have an individual infection or local outbreak. If past actions and the conditions that triggered them have not been documented, companies should do so immediately. Not only will this help you to prepare for future waves, but it will also help you plan an efficient “de-escalation” from the current wave. Some considerations include:

- Conditions that triggered action (stages within a wave)
- Actions taken
- Why actions were taken
- Were actions voluntary or mandated by local, state or federal authorities
- Were actions effective, if not what could have been done differently
- What actions might have been done differently with more planning time available

Business and Long-Term Planning Considerations

Business Priorities

Business priorities have likely changed during, and as a result of COVID-19. Accordingly, companies should take the time to fully evaluate their business environment, determine and document business priorities. Discussing and documenting business priorities prior to, during and after COVID-19 will likely provided tremendous insight into the development of short- and long-term goals and objectives.

Organizational Alignment

Every department or function has been impacted to some degree by COVID-19 and has reacted to mitigate its impact. To ensure an effective, efficient, and coordinated approach, each department and function need to be in alignment with each other’s efforts. A simple matrix with departments/functions on one axis and actions taken on the other can be used to help promote organizational alignment.

Situational awareness protocols and resources - External and Internal

External

General Conditions - There have been many great public sources of information that companies have utilized to stay current with the COVID-19 situation. These sources should be documented for future use. Documentation should include:

- Name
- How to access
- Information provided
- How information will be utilized

Suppliers and Customers – In spite of a company’s best efforts to resume their operations, it can all be in vain if suppliers and/or customers have been impacted as a result of COVID-19. Regular communication with both suppliers and customers is essential to ensure a coordinated resumption of business operations.

Internal

The need to efficiently gather and disseminate key information has never been greater. Company leadership should not need to regularly reach out to internal stakeholders in an effort to gather needed information. Leadership should set internal stakeholder expectations for:

- What information is needed
- How often it should be provided
- What format the information is provided

The absence of preplanning will result in wasted resources, inaccurate or outdated information and poor decision making.

Coordinated Communication

Much like the need for a coordinated internal response to COVID-19, a coordinated effort is also needed for communication to internal and external stakeholders. Differing messages going to key stakeholders can decrease employee confidence and negatively impact a company’s brand. Accordingly, efforts should be made to ensure that core message content is consistent and coordinated for all stakeholders. Messages can be modified or framed differently for each stakeholder while maintaining consistent core content. A simple matrix with stakeholders on one axis and core messages on the other can be used to help promote organizational alignment.