

Making the Best Comeback

This pandemic is new for all human beings living in this world. Hence, solutions have to be innovated along multiple dimensions right from demand generation, supply chain and alternate revenue streams to health and safety of employees. The recommendations below are focused on giving employees the assurance that they are not only safe at work but also deeply cared for.

Communicating the context from the top level leaders

The unusual challenges that we are faced with, call for organisations to make many changes in the way they carry out their business. We anticipate changes in the way an organisation interacts with its stakeholders: customers, suppliers, employees, shareholders and the community. As a result, changes will likely be made in the structure, systems and work processes. Leaders have to communicate this to all the employees and seek their understanding. People managers across the ranks have to reiterate and sensitise their direct reports to expect and adapt to the changes quickly.

Relevant to organisation context

There are some businesses: entertainment, hospitality, restaurants, retail, services, manufacturing, mining and construction for whom work-from-home is not a feasible solution. Moreover, employees are expected to be in close contact among themselves or with external stakeholders during the course of work. For all these sectors, social distancing has to be applied and sanitisation of the facility has to be enhanced.

Staying abreast with all guidelines and advisories from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is critical. The Ministry updates its guidelines frequently based on changing circumstances and implementation of the following advisory should likewise be updated and should always stay in-line with Ministry recommendations.

Advisory for Employees

1. Ask employees to start for office or work only if he or she is healthy and scheduled to come to work. In case he or she feels sick, or is having severe cough, sneezing or breathing difficulty, he/she is asked to go back home or stay at home under medical consultation. Sick leave will be granted to the employee from his/ her balance of leaves.
2. Ask employees to wear home-made face masks (which you may choose to supply) while at work so that respiratory hygiene can be maintained and any accidental cough or sneeze would not impact others.
3. For as long as the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare includes it in its advisory, social distancing should be maintained at all times. Workplaces have to be operated with 50% employee strength. Alternate seating arrangement has to be adopted in the workspace, canteen, pantry, meeting rooms, company bus etc. as applicable. A gap of 6ft from another person has to be adopted at entry, exit gates, queues, discussion areas, breakout areas, etc. as applicable.

4. Check body temperature for anyone entering the workplace. Just in case someone's temperature is above-normal, one is denied entry and advised consultation with doctor.
5. Ask employees to wash their hands frequently with soap and water or alcoholic hand rub.
6. Employees who have been in contact with an infected person are at high risk. They have to self-declare and will not be allowed to come to work. They will be granted work-from-home wherever possible and will be advised self-isolation for a period advised by competent health authorities. When remote work is not feasible, they will be deemed to be on-duty.
7. Ask employees to stop car / bike pooling, not lend personal tools and equipment such as tools at work, bike, vehicle, laptop, mobile phone etc. to others. Advise them to check driver health before boarding a taxi or rickshaw and avoid touching surfaces as much as possible and disinfect hands after getting off of public or private transport.

Managing Office / Work Facilities

1. Frequent touchpoints such as doors, knobs, handles and various surfaces people come in contact with have to be frequently disinfected. The rule of thumb is to increase the sanitisation frequency to 2-3x.
2. Travel for employees has to be restricted. Best attempt must be made to conduct meetings virtually.
3. Keep workspaces well ventilated by either by keeping windows and doors open periodically or by adequate ventilation systems.
4. Employees in certain roles or levels can continue to operate remotely without impacting their output. Such cases can be listed and employees in those specific cases may be permitted to work remotely subject to the approval of their reporting manager.
5. Explore the possibility of offering employees with counselling sessions to help them deal with stressful situations arising out of the disruptions caused by the pandemic.
6. Visitors to company premises are to be avoided unless it is essential. If one has to host a visitor, the following norms have to be followed:
 - a. Visitor movement has to be restricted to certain areas within the premises,
 - b. Personal contact with the visitor has to be avoided,
 - c. The visitor must wear a mask and be advised to maintain social distance while interacting with others while inside the premises
 - d. The visitor should disinfect his/her hands and tools such as laptops to be used during the interaction.
7. Educate employees on personal hygiene such as hand wash, respiration (cough and sneeze), usage of mask (including disposal), meeting etiquette and norms for remote working.
8. Suggest employees on best practices related to health and hygiene at home, for example homes with babies, infants, kids or elderly who might be at higher risk of infection need to adopt special measures. Similarly, there are guidelines to follow if there is a covid-19 confirmed case in the neighbourhood. Employees can be made aware of these as a refresher training.
9. Form a covid-19 response team comprising senior and mid-level managers drawn from various functions within the organisation to formulate the response of the organisation to the pandemic, review implementation, make course corrections and raise preparedness for dealing with such situations in future albeit in a smaller scale. Involve local health officer and labour officer in the discussions as the organisation may deem fit.

Contact us: CIEL HR Services Private Limited, info@cielhr.com, +91 7816 000 111