

## RETURNING TO WORKPLACE AFTER LOCKDOWN: WHAT ALL NEEDS TO BE PUT IN PLACE FOR EMPLOYEES

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Dr. Irshad Raza\*  
Dr. Md Umar Rayees\*\*  
Dr. Anis Ahmad\*\*\*

### ABSTRACT

*In this tough time where whole world is under the threat of the novel corona virus (COVID-19). Employers are likely to face many challenges in reorganization their obligations and business needs along providing their employees to choose and manage their personal and professional life while during remote work. Novel corona virus (COVID-19) is a rapidly growing virus and its impact on the company and the world has been strong and rapid. The practices describes above will not only help protect employees, the community, and company reputation, but also position companies for a smoother transition as they arrange going back to the offices. The country has been relieved from the lockdown and traveling limitations, businesses have started to plan the operations of their onsite workplaces. Some quick checklist of activities government and company should follow while planning to reopen your workplaces. At present, the only tools to combat the viral spread are using masks properly, introduction of social distancing measures, and practice of good hand hygiene and vaccination. Since then, the virus has spread rapidly. India is overcoming with this corona pandemic and is in the stage of 'unlock' most of the workplace are becoming accessible once again but we cannot completely ignore the virus as well, Protocol and guidelines needs to be a taken into consideration with social distancing. In service sector, are treading cautiously and to the extent possible, the employers are continuously encouraging their employees to work from home. To adopt the new normal and be equipped to deal with issues for it, employers should develop a well-defined work ethic with respect to hours of service, preferred workplace, applicable benefits, occupational safety and health, data security and prevention of workplace Harassment.*

**Keywords:** *Pandemic, Health Risks, Economy, Framework, Vaccine, and Policy of Company.*

### Introduction

The world is witnessing unprecedented times and is battling with the onslaught of a virus. In the last few months many things have been changed, our way of working has been badly affected. The pandemic has changed the work culture and forced organizations to work remotely and adopt digital ways to improve business operations and employee performance. Work from home has been a new experience for everyone as it has modified the working process right from a meeting to hiring new employees. All this has now moved to virtual platforms. With the announcement of the easing of the nationwide lockdown by the government, some organizations have started going back to the offices to ensure that workflow does not stop during the uncertain times. In the light of the current situation, companies are taking several preventive measures to ensure social distancing and good hygiene at the workplace, eliminating all chances of the spread of COVID-19.

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\* Academia, Department of Commerce & Business Management, Ranchi University, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India.

\*\* Accountant, State Project Management Unit, Jharkhand Tribal Development Society, Morabadi, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India.

\*\*\* Assistant Professor, Faculty of Commerce, R D & D J College, Munger University, Munger, Bihar, India.

Having said that, putting humanity before profits should be the motto for any company in this crucial time. It has become extremely important to make employees feel safe and secure while taking charge of the back office. Enough time and space must be given to them to make their ways back to the workplace. At Stratbeans, we have always valued our team before anything else. During the last few months, we took necessary steps to create a flexible remote working culture for our employees. Being an agile company, transition from work-from-office to work-from-home was quite smooth for us.

At this early stage of reopening, it is a bit too soon to speak about bringing all our employees back at once. Keeping social distancing norms in mind, we will continue to allow remote working as much as possible for as many team members as we can. In addition, we plan to resume in-person arrangements from July. To protect essential workers against COVID-19, we are working on policies to ensure proper workplace hygiene. Similarly, we also plan to hold counseling sessions for our people to reduce stress due to the developing uncertainties. The current scenario has changed the way we interact with our customers and prospects, and even with the employees as well as the overall daily operations. Hence, some methods, meetings and events will continue to be via virtual platforms.

Although the pandemic has changed perceptions of remote working, it may not be a long-term solution for all enterprises. Hence, companies, which are planning to reopen their respective workplaces, will have to keep the employee safety in mind as from a business perspective; protecting the well being of the employees is paramount as no plan can be normal without them. Returning to the workplace is not just a matter of revamping the business projects. Organizations need to set new engagement strategies to keep their employees motivated. They also need to consider establishing guidelines for the use of personal protective equipment, such as facemasks and gloves, while checking the temperatures of employees and visitors before entering the premises.

#### **Objectives of Study**

The main objectives of the research study are:

- Planning to reopen your workplaces.
- Albeit under extraordinary rules.
- Enabling the reopening of the economy to continue to champion the health and safety of citizens.
- The current crisis is driven by a health problem a treatment or a vaccine for the novel corona virus.

#### **Research & Methodology**

The complete process of research starts with defining problems or opportunities and ending up with preparation and solution to it.

#### **Data Collection Methods**

There are two types of data that will be used for the study. It includes

##### **Primary Data Collection**

It is the original fact or data collected by the researcher through observation, inquiry, Questionnaire etc. Usually primary data is more reliable and it is time consuming process.

##### **Secondary Data Collection**

The data which is collected by others and if we are only using such data then it is called secondary data. In this research paper I have used secondary data for planning to reopen your workplaces and some necessary activities employees should follow while returning to workplace after lockdown.

#### **The Reopening Framework**

The number of offices reopened in view of the unlock guidelines of the Central Government; Employees have started returning to work. However, it should be noted that till now the cases of corona virus are not completely gone from the country and the employees need to be extra careful while working in the office. From wearing masks to maintaining social distancing, employees need to follow certain COVID guidelines to stay safe at the workplace. Private and government offices were opened as the nationwide lockdown took a toll on businesses and individuals. Work from home (WFH) became a widely accepted system during the lockdown period. Although the pandemic has changed the perception of remote working, it may not be a long-term solution for all enterprises. Returning employees to the

workplace during and after the COVID-19 pandemic will not be as easy as announcing a date to reopen the workplace or return and do business as usual. Not only will many workplaces be changed initially, some changes may be long-term, even if vaccines become more widely available. The details of each employer's plan to return will look different, but there are 10 key issues you'll need to understand and start preparing for now.

- **Workplace Safety:** Employers must ensure that their workplaces are as safe as possible. Employees and customers alike may fear returning to business as usual; Preparing and communicating how safety is a top priority will remove fear and increase brand loyalty. Providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like: Masks, Gloves, Face shield, Physical distancing etc.
- **Recall Procedures:** Plan how and when employees will return to work or the workplace to create an organized and controlled approach. All workers returning at the same time on the same day can be overwhelming and possibly unsafe.
- **Employee Benefits:** Whether or not the employee remains on the employer's benefit plans, some notice or action may be required to remain in compliance. Employees should be notified of these changes as soon as possible.
- **Compensation:** Many employers may have made compensation changes during the crisis by now, and others may need to make them as they reopen. How the disruption has affected compensation policies going forward will also need to be reviewed and communicated to affected employees.
- **Remote Work:** For some employers and employees, telecommuting may prove to work well during the pandemic. It should be used not only as a short-term emergency tool but also as a permanent work/life balance and cost-saving measure.
- **Communications:** Establishing a clear communication plan will help employees and customers understand how the organization plans to reopen or re-establish business processes.
- **New-hire Paperwork:** Returning workers who remained on the payroll generally will not need to complete new paperwork. However, for job layoffs, such as laid-off employees, it may be best to follow normal hiring procedures.
- **Policy Changes:** This is no longer business as usual, and employers will need to update or create policies to reflect the new normal.
- **Business Continuity Plans:** Employers may have learned valuable lessons about their business continuity plans, or lack thereof, during the past months. Now is the time to review and revise the plan to prepare for future emergencies.
- **Unions:** Employers with a unionized workforce may have additional considerations, including: determining bargaining obligations when implementing changes to mandatory bargaining disciplines such as wages and benefits.

COVID-19 is a fast-moving virus and its impact on organizations and the world has been strong and swift. The practices mentioned above will not only help protect the reputation of employees, the community, and the company, but will also position companies for an easier transition as they make arrangements to return to the workplace.

### Conclusion

The Novel corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges in terms of employer-employee relations. Since March 2020, most establishments across the world have seen a transition in what was traditionally considered a 'workplace' to a 'virtual workspace' as employees was now required to work from their home. Apart from the reduction of operational costs, there is a growing realization that productivity of employees has not been compromised while working from home. Therefore, work from home is not only a continuing phenomenon at present but is deemed as the 'new normal' and is likely to stay even after pandemic discontinues holding the sway.

The COVID-19 crisis is certainly disrupting businesses in every aspect, but something better will happen if we proactively act with a smart approach. The current situation is allowing us to analyze a new workplace where people come together, reinforce culture and strengthen relationships. We are sure this new workplace is changing the thought process where people matter more than ever. This has resulted in completely new ways of working and there is a hunger to create a 'new normal' for each business individually.

### **Suggestion & Recommendations**

Looking ahead and planning for contingencies. The future remains uncertain, and India will need to be ready for all sorts of eventualities. It would be wise at all levels of government to develop contingency plans based on scenarios of possible COVID-19 impacts. India's economy will need to deal with COVID-19 for a long time. A well-implemented, granular, dynamic and locally driven lockdown- and restart-management capability is required when managing health risks. A lot, both life and livelihood, is at stake for India in securing this right. Implementing a workforce vaccination strategy to include:

- Surveying employees regarding their intentions to receive the vaccine.
- Developing a voluntary or mandatory vaccination policy.
- Handling religious or medical accommodation requests.
- Communicating with public/employees about the vaccine.

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