



Understanding the people impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus)



The business world is constantly learning how to adapt to change. The impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) is affecting how organizations address immediate and strategic people issues.

Talent-related people risk exists across five core categories—Capacity, Cost, Connection, Capability, and Compliance. How talent risk emerges varies based on the type of working environment people are in and how work gets done. Delivery of work is largely connected to one or more of five key dimensions—People, Place, Information, Machines, and Contract. Navigating change is a key component of mitigating these risks.

The table below highlights key people issues and considerations. Core examples are:

- Professional and white-collar employees are primarily interfacing with information and people;
- Manufacturing and industrial employees with equipment and place;
- Service, retail, and hospitality employees with place and people;
- Healthcare workers with place, people, and information; and
- Contractors and collective bargaining workers are heavily influenced by the nature of their contract.

		Talent risks				
		Workforce capacity	Cost	Connection	Required capability	Compliance
Work dimensions	My work is tied to a place	Physical access (including commute)	Risk-based resource reallocation	Engage with customers/ stakeholders	Task reallocation based on physical and labor constraints	Temporary approval processes, revised controls
	My work is tied to other people	Change schedules to support demand	Revise employee policies	Morale and collaboration	Identify critical resources and dependency	Safety standards and information
	My work is based on information and ideas	Remote working and access	Remote technology deployment	New ways of working and interaction	Consider collaboration and decision-making contingencies	Rapid compliance education
	My work requires plant and equipment	Scenario triggers for delivering results	Revised schedules to support ramp up/down	Increased communication to floor and field workers	Review personal protective equipment	Replicable security
	I work under contract	Volume, workflow, and productivity consideration	Temporary contract adjustments	Communicate and engage stakeholders	Ability for all parties to meet contract terms	Information access and posting

*Please note that only some workforce characteristics will apply to your organization, while all talent risk categories do.

Taking action

Understanding the people issues helps organizations frame priorities in assessing, understanding, and addressing the unique risk for their organization and workforce. The following checklists are suggestions that should be considered in relation to each organization and varying people needs.

We have presented three checklists:

- **Core:** Many organizations will have addressed these activities already
- **Now:** Pathfinding organizations have started taking these steps
- **Next:** These are future-oriented actions that organizations will need to address.

Checklist – Core

Capacity

- Have you **accounted for your entire workforce** and the regions they work in? Are there any **specific regions** that face greater impact from COVID-19? Are you ramping down capacity there? Is relocation in progress?
- Have you assessed your current organizational **capability, processes, and protocols for remote working**?
- Have you planned **reassigning resources** from **noncritical tasks** to most critical tasks?
- Have you reviewed key **decision-making processes** in the organization? Is there a **change in any accountability**?

Cost

- Have you decided the **impact on the travel/seminars/conferences** that your employees are participating in or your organization is planning?
- Have you reviewed **reimbursement policies for remote workers'** home office equipment?
- Have you reviewed your **policies on paid and unpaid leaves, project releases, capacity ramp downs, and idle employees**? Have you **reviewed and discussed the critical changes** with senior leadership team?
- Have you accounted for **changes in productivity**?

Connection

- Can your **information technology (IT) infrastructure** support the full adoption of remote working?
- Have you been **communicating with your employees** regularly on all the changes and next steps? Are you simplifying communication so people are **not overwhelmed by the volume of information**?
- Is remote working supported by **policies, procedures, and established norms**? If not, what are the policies that need to be created? Have your **clients been informed** about the remote working arrangements?
- Are you **motivating your employees** to prevent burnout? Are you planning to set up **employee support networks**?

Capability

- Have you **identified critical capabilities in your organization** that will be most impacted by COVID-19?
- Do you have a **short-term development plan for reallocating resources** to address gaps/unexpected immediate needs?
- Are **leaders prepared and** do they understand the new norm for making informed decisions?
- Is the current infrastructure available for remote working, **optimum for delivering necessary results**?
- Have you decided to **change performance expectations**? How are you planning to **support your employees** through that?

Compliance

- Do you have a plan to help ensure that employees are aware of and compliant with your **social media policy**, especially when social media usage may be heightened? Have you evaluated that?
- Have you done a **risk assessment** of the identified collaborative technological tools?
- Are you communicating the importance of **data security**? **Phishing scams** can be prevalent at this time.
- Have you confirmed the **immigration and visa status of all your expat employees** given potential travel bans? Are there any significant **risks in any specific location**?

Change

- Have you established an **employee check-in process** to understand any key concerns or any **change issues or challenges**? Are you also planning to allow them to write or post anonymously?
- Have you **identified, staffed, and trained a crisis response team** to keep your employees, customers, and business partners informed?
- Have you **aligned your senior leadership team** on new ways of working, e.g., leading virtual teams?
- Have you **communicated the new ways of working and leading practices** to your employees?

Checklist - Now

Capacity

- Have you identified the **critical regions/customers/functions where you need continued capacity**? Have you started the **conversation with the critical customers and suppliers** on capacity ramp up/down?
- Have you **revised your workforce plan**? Does your workforce plan include **“what if” scenarios**?
- How are you **planning to reallocate work** from one function/team to the other? Is there a process in place?
- Have you **created a Business Continuity Plan (BCP)** in case your employees are quarantined? Is backup capacity available?

Cost

- Are there **new cost implications of remote access related** to technology and tools? Have they been assessed?
- Have you **started reviewing the cost and time impact of changes to the workforce plan**? Are you planning to **activate hiring freeze** for some time?
- Have you invested in **cross-skilling employees** to create talent pools in case there is a hiring freeze for some time?
- Have you evaluated the impact of the external factors on your **salesforce performance and earnings** opportunity?

Connection

- How are you planning to keep **employee motivation and morale** high during this period?
- Do you have the **training and necessary support mechanisms** to enable **full adoption of remote working**? If the answer is “no,” **who needs training and support** and how quickly can it be implemented?
- Is there a structured plan to **promote the well-being of employees** and protect productivity while embracing large-scale adoption of remote working?
- Are you planning to **accommodate different timing arrangements** due to closure of schools/missing support system at homes? Will a new **flexible work time policy** be needed?

Capability

- Are you reviewing **employee performance projections** for the year? Have you started prioritizing work and listing **mission-critical work** items?
- Do you have the **ability to reskill employees** while they are working remotely? Do you understand the current and previous experience and capabilities of your resources? Are you able to determine **which resources can be rapidly reskilled** should demand require?
- Have you identified people who are a **top retention priority** for the organization? Have you spoken with them?

Compliance

- Are people **able to comply with your regulated processes** while working from home, e.g., are electronic approval processes in place? Do you have a plan to address **renewal of required professional licenses** for employees?
- Do you have compressed and readily **accessible knowledge transfer** and on-boarding programs to address your compliance requirements? How are you planning to **communicate with contract workforce**?
- How do you plan to support **protected workforce groups and enhance overall inclusion and diversity** in this environment?

Change

- How do you **identify, measure, and address resistance when working virtually**? Have you identified action plans?
- How do you know **key leaders are aligned to current initiatives and efforts**? Are **leadership action plans** developed and in place?
- Have you identified **what changes are likely to become permanent** and which will revert to prepandemic state?
- Do you have the ability to follow through and execute on the **changes required for the in-flight initiatives** in the organization? How will you **keep the teams engaged** even if the initiatives are stopped for some time?

Checklist - Next

Capacity

- How will you **renegotiate the workforce capacity expectations** with your critical customers?
- What will be the potential changes in **customer service delivery mechanism** that will have lasting impact on capacity planning? What will be the **new assumptions for planning capacity**?
- How will that change the **future workforce planning process**? What are the new drivers that will be included in workforce planning? How will you **embed an agile mindset in leaders** for future workforce planning?

Cost

- Do you have mechanisms in place to **review/reallocate resources across high-demand areas**? Can you plan **sharing of critical resources**?
- What are the **new policies you need to draft to balance employee costs and business continuity**? Have you fully considered the **impact of short-term cost reduction on your longer-term ability to maintain business continuity** and future business growth?
- Have you started **evaluating incentive plan performance goals** for management and broader workforce?

Connection

- If there is a **delay or constraint in adopting noncritical but necessary IT infrastructure**, how is this going to be communicated? Will it impact the **nature of relationships** between different employee groups?
- How will you drive a **culture of collaboration**? How will you **build virtual connections** as part of talent strategy?
- Is your organization equipped to minimize **potential feelings of isolation** among your workforce?
- How will you strengthen and empower your **global employee support groups**?

Capability

- Do you have a review mechanism in place to **assess the need for remote mentoring** and knowledge transfer?
- Will you need programs to **support the rapid reskilling of the workforce** or to further develop capability in new or related competencies while working remote?
- How will you define **build, buy, and borrow talent strategies** considering this scenario to extend in future? How will you create **agile models so that ramp-ups/downs** can be easily managed?
- How will you **build leadership capabilities** to manage this agility and ambiguity in the future?

Compliance

- Are you able to **mobilize teams to provide multijurisdiction/regionwide services** if required for business continuity? What if the current situation extends beyond a few months?
- How will you **evaluate virtual employee compliance**? Do you need to build new tools?
- Are you able to **conduct talent and performance reviews** and implement any necessary short-term actions to help ensure ongoing compliance?
- How will you design **new T&E policies for employees** for future? How will you **track and manage overtime**?

Change

- How will you support the **changes your organization and employees** are facing from the social, political, economic, and other external dynamics? How will you **prepare your leaders** to lead in the future in situations like these?
- How will you start planning for **people strategies after the COVID-19 pandemic**? What factors will you include in planning? Do you plan to conduct **social network analysis** to understand who your influencers are to align your communication and change strategy?
- Will you use any analysis or focus groups to understand how **employees feel about changes** in the organization?

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