Your guide to transitioning your team back into the workplace

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Help your team transition back to work seamlessly

How to use this guide

This guide is designed to help you formulate and roll out a comprehensive plan to enable your team transition back into the workplace safely.

We recommend collaborating with your leadership team and consulting with your staff to develop this plan.

Your team's safety – and the safety of your customers – is of the highest priority, and this guide will help you effectively manage reopening your doors without putting your team at risk.

Government restrictions

Governments all over the world are taking significantly different approaches to mitigating the ongoing risks of COVID-19.

Understanding these guidelines and restrictions is an essential first step in planning your return to work.

Australia: The Australian Government has created a three step framework that provides a pathway for the reopening of the economy.

https://www.pm.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/three-step-framework-covidsafe-australia.pdf

New Zealand: The New Zealand Government has created a four level measure to ease back into reopening the economy.

https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/tables/COVID-19-alert-levels-summary.pdf

Singapore: The Singapore Government will gradually resume activities after 1 June 2020.

https://www.gov.sg/article/how-will-businesses-gradually-resume-activities-after-1-june-2020

South Africa: The South African Government has introduced a three-phased strategy to jump start the recovery of the economy.

https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/three-phased-economic-response-covid-19-pandemic

UK: The UK Government is taking a three phase approach to its economic recovery post-coronavirus.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884760/Our_plan_to_rebuild_The_UK_Government_s_COVID-19_recovery_strategy.pdf

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Key risks

Returning to work will naturally involve some level of risk. Exactly what the highest risks are for your team will depend on the unique nature of your business.

For example, if the majority of your employees rely on public transport to get to work, this will be a key area of focus. Or if you are located in a large shopping centre, this will present its own set of challenges.

Once you have identified these key risks, you will need to decide exactly how will you manage them. Be as detailed as possible, and try to approach the solution from all angles.

Safety and hygiene practices

Social distancing: Social distancing requirements are changing almost daily. Monitor the latest information from the government to understand exactly what measures you are required to take in your business.

PPE: Consider the basics such as face masks and sanitiser, and ensure you have a reliable supply, as these items can be difficult to come by.

Additional safety measures: For customer-facing staff, additional measures such as sneeze guards at cash registers and service desks may need to be addressed before your team returns to work.

Air quality: Air quality is key to preventing the spread of COVID-19. Ensure your air conditioning system is working efficiently and schedule cleaning and maintenance.

Cleaning: Determine what regular cleaning will need to be done to ensure appropriate hygiene. Create a cleaning log as an active reminder to employees to maintain safe practices.

Checklists: Creating checklists or posters your team can review before they start each shift will help remind them to follow correct procedures, every time.

Training: Don't assume your staff know the best way to put on a face mask or wipe down a counter. Provide them with comprehensive training on all aspects of PPE and social distancing practices.

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Tracking apps

Tracking apps: Effectively tracking who is working, when, is essential to preventing the spread of COVID-19. Many governments have introduced tracking apps including:

- **Australia:** COVIDSafe
- **Singapore:** SafeEntry and TraceTogether
- **UK:** NHS COVID app
- **South Africa:** coviid.me.

Asking your team to download these apps and keep their mobile phones on their person will help everyone in the workplace stay safe.

Rostering best practices

Isolate in teams: Customer-facing employees such as retail and hospitality workers may be at a greater risk of contracting COVID-19 than office-based workforces.

You can help mitigate this risk by grouping your employees into distinct teams, whose shifts do not cross over with those of other teams.

This will mean each team interacts with fewer people, helping minimise exposure and enabling thorough cleaning in between shifts.

Shift management software: Using the right rostering software will help you track exactly who was working, when, making it easier to identify any team members who may have come into contact with any confirmed cases.

Dealing with customers

Capacity: As businesses have started to reopen, many have already experienced a significant influx of customers, even compared with business before COVID-19. Check government guidelines to determine how many people are allowed inside your premises, and have a plan in place to ensure you can adhere to these guidelines.

Queue management: Make sure you have enough room for customers to queue, either inside or outside your premises. You may need to work with neighbouring businesses or centre management to come up with a workable solution.

Other measures: Some businesses are taking additional measures based on government guidelines and risk factors, such as taking every customer's temperature as they enter. Work with your team to determine which additional measures are appropriate for your unique circumstances.

Policies: Based on the above, create a policy for your team and customers to follow, to ensure everyone's safety when they are on your premises. Communicate this policy via clear signage, as well as verbally where necessary.

Manager training: Make sure a manager on every shift is specifically trained in dealing with customers who do not follow social distancing practices. That way, if a team member feels unsafe, they will have someone senior who can help.

Travel considerations

Public transport: In many countries catching public transport, especially during peak hour, is still deemed unsafe. If your team relies on public transport to get to work, help them find alternative modes of transport such as car pooling to reduce the risk of infection.

Mental health

Survey: Survey your team regularly to understand how they are feeling about returning to work, and where they may be struggling. We have put together a template to help guide you, which you can download with today's course materials.

One-on-one support: When all or part of the team is working remotely, it can be particularly difficult to gauge whether your team is suffering in terms of their mental health. Spend time with each of your team members individually, stay alert for clues such as body language or sudden changes in their appearance, and make sure you ask them how they are coping.

Free local services: Ensure your team knows how to access support if they need it. Many organisations offer free over-the-phone help for anyone experiencing mental health issues.

Employee assistance program: Many employers are offering free and anonymous counselling services to their employees, to help them with any mental health issues they may be experiencing.

Communicating your plan

Clear communication is key in times of uncertainty, to help make your team feel safe and listened to. Keep your team in the loop with your decisions, and make sure you ask for and act on their feedback.

Once you have created your COVID-19 plan, it is essential to communicate all the details with your employees. This will help ensure they understand how you plan to keep them safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, and what their responsibilities are.

As the COVID-19 situation is in a constant state of flux, it's important to stay on top of the latest government guidelines. Communicate any changes that affect your team immediately – don't wait for rumours to take hold.

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Physical wellness

Sick leave policy: Make sure employees understand what their sick leave entitlements are before they get sick. This will help encourage team members who are unwell to stay at home.

Flu shots: Many businesses are providing free flu shots for their team, to help maintain their overall health during the pandemic and reduce the risks should employees get sick.

Manage any COVID-19 cases

Government guidelines: If the worst should happen, and a team member or customer tests positive to COVID-19, it pays to be prepared. Ensure you follow government guidelines and instructions for team members who have been exposed.

Communication: Clear communication with your team during this time is also essential. Chances are they will be feeling frightened and exposed. Ensure everyone is aware of exactly what the potential risks are based on their level of exposure, and work with them to answer their questions, alleviate their concerns, and ensure they have access to the proper testing.

Ongoing review

Constant change: As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, you will need to check the latest information from the government regularly, and amend this plan accordingly.

Important note:

This document is intended as a guide only and does not replace the latest advice from the government. Please obtain independent legal advice prior to acting on anything in this document.

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Industry-specific guidelines

Many industry bodies have prepared industry-specific guidelines on returning to work. You can use these as a starting point for your transition plan.

Australia

- **Retail:** Roadmap to retail recovery: https://www.nra.net.au/app/uploads/2020/05/200511_NRA_Roadmap-to-Retail-Recovery_v2.pdf
- **Restaurants:** Restaurant reopening best practice guidelines: http://rca.asn.au/rca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/RCA-Restaurant-Reopening-Best-Practice-Guidelines-May-2020.pdf

New Zealand

- **Food:** Guidelines for operating your food business during alert level 3: https://api.hospitality.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Operating-Under-Alert-L3-V3-2.pdf
- **Food:** Reopening a food business after COVID-19 level 4: https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/40256-checklist-for-re-opening-a-food-business-after-covid-19-alert-level-4
- **Retail:** Retail protocol for operating at level 3 or 2: http://www.retail.kiwi/system/resources/

Singapore

- **Food & beverage:** Safe management measures: https://www.enterprisesg.gov.sg/media-centre/media-releases/2020/may-2020/safe-management-measures-for-food_beverage-establishments
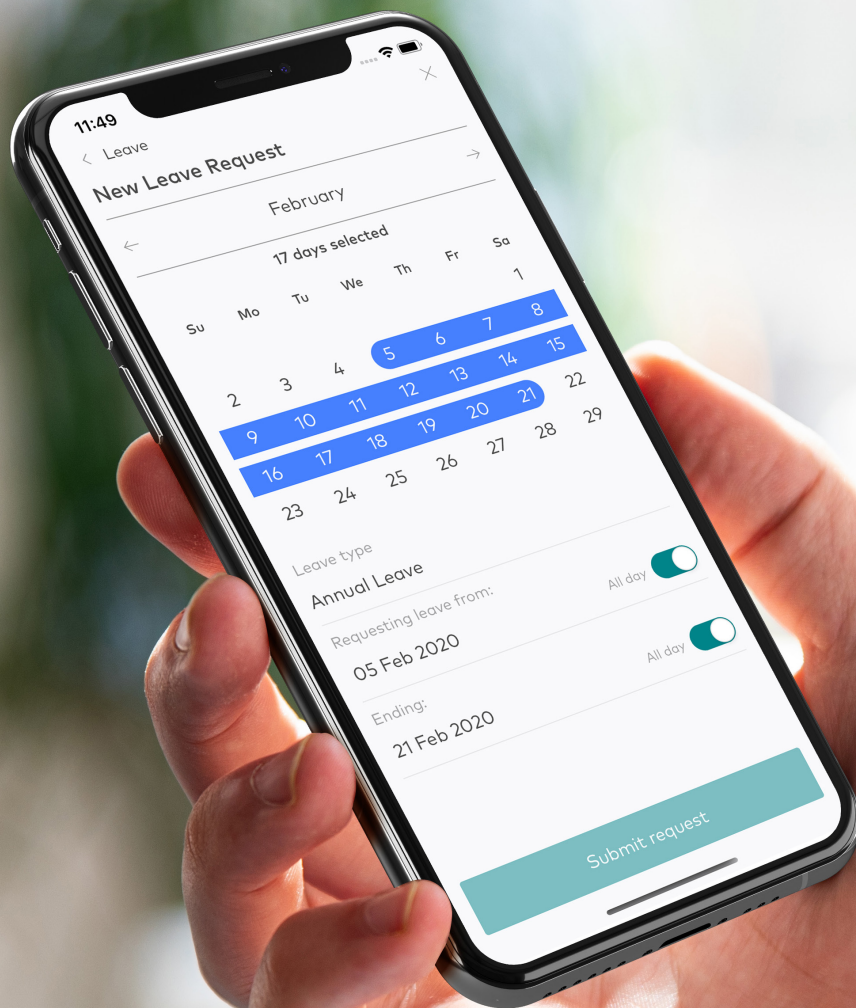
- **Retail:** Safe management measures for retail establishments: https://www.enterprisesg.gov.sg/media-centre/media-releases/2020/may-2020/safe-management-measures-for-retail-establishments
- **Retail:** How Singapore retailers need to transform and be future-ready: https://www.mti.gov.sg/-/media/MTI/ITM/Lifestyle/Retail/Commentary-Retail-ITM.pdf
- **Retail:** Resources to help retailers: http://ras.org.sg/activities/riding-through-covid-19/

South Africa

- **Fast food:** Standard operating procedures for fast food outlets following COVID-19 lockdown: https://www.cgcsa.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/STANDARD-OPERATING-PROCEDURES-WITH-ANNEXURES-FOR-FAST-FOOD-OUTLETS-30042020.pdf
- **All industries:** Risk adjusted approach: http://www.drakenstein.gov.za/docs/Documents/20200425%20Presentation-on-Risk-Adjusted-Approach.pdf

UK

- **Retail:** Working safely during COVID-19 in shops and branches: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb9703de90e07082fa57ce0/working-safely-during-covid-19-shops-branches-110520.pdf
- **Restaurants:** Working safely during COVID-19 in restaurants offering takeaway or delivery: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb96e8e86650c278b077616/working-safely-during-covid-19-restaurants-takeaway-delivery-110520.pdf

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Want to learn more about how to
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