



Addressing the impact of COVID-19 Considerations for getting back to work, efficiently and effectively

A significant focus for organizations right now is managing through the unprecedented workforce conditions resulting from the response to COVID-19.

In the days and weeks to come, as we learn more, turn corners, and find the “next normal,” it will be critically important to shift focus to planning for how to most efficiently and effectively “ramp back up.” This will require proactive scenario planning that integrates financial models with workforce strategies. There will be no “one-size-fits-all” solution. Each organization will need an approach that meets the needs of their size and scale, aligned with the nature and extent to which they have ramped down.

Below are key areas to consider when it comes to “ramping back up” that will be relevant across organizations.

Build agility for the future

The impact of COVID-19 has clearly demonstrated the need for organizations to examine their ability to be nimble and responsive to business and people planning. As things ramp back up, consider:

- **Business models:** Is it time to re-assess and/or re-invent legacy models?
- **Workforce mix:** Are alternative workforce segments (e.g., automation & machine learning, gig & contract workers, vendors) viable options to reduce the impact of future disruption?
- **Upskilling & cross-training:** Which capabilities are most critical to operational continuity (e.g., crisis management)? How can these areas be upskilled and cross-trained so that the workforce can work anytime, anywhere?
- **Digital:** How can more aspects of the business be digitized to enhance the way services are delivered, ensure sustainable virtual and team-based working, and enable more flexibility to scale and up and down in the future?

Key areas of consideration:

- **Future workforce strategies:** Drawing on lessons learned from ramping down will allow for the development of enhanced workforce strategies to manage future requirements.
- **Operational planning:** Returning large numbers of workers to work will require employing a series of tactics, which could include establishing clearance protocols for returning to physical work locations, prioritizing mission critical operations for staged return, and preparing for continued absenteeism
- **Employee Experience:** Enabling an effective return will be highly dependent on how employees are engaged by their leaders during this time of uncertainty. Ensuring regular, transparent communication that keeps employee well-being and community front & centre will build the trust needed for effective re-integration.

Questions you should ask yourselves

Where might we apply lessons learned to future workforce strategies?

- **Dynamic forecasting:** adjust or establish approaches to workforce forecasting, in collaboration with unions, where applicable, that use strategic scenario planning to account for both real-time and anticipated future change
- **Performance indicators:** establish and monitor key metrics to identify challenges as they are emerging (e.g., postpone additional workforce ramp up, due to delayed production)
- **Recruitment & retention:** focus on continuing to build increased loyalty across the workforce, while looking at opportunities to engage top-talent in the market to fill new/emerging needs
- **Redundancies and rehires:** plan for statutory limitations on temporary workforce reductions and limits on mass terminations; consider recall rights (seniority or other ordered recall procedures) and evaluate the impact and benefit of voluntary unpaid leaves for helping to manage re-integration efforts; work collaboratively with unions, as applicable

What would some of our ramp-up tactics look like?

- **Operational prioritization & staged return:** develop operational scaling plans for “must have” services/roles, including temporary and permanent succession plans; consider staggering return dates based on prioritization; adjust shift schedules and/or working hours to meet evolving operational needs
- **Cross-training:** establish continuous training for mission-critical capabilities and possible upskilling for redundant workers
- **Support function requirements:** reassess the appropriate size and composition of support functions to enable and stabilize the new realities of operations (e.g., IT, finance, HR)
- **Clearance protocols:** establish guidelines for how you will assess the ability for workers to safely return to physical/onsite office locations (e.g., doctor’s notes)

What might employee experience and wellness strategies include?

- **Tiered communication:** use multiple channels (i.e., top of house, team leaders, daily stand-ups) and communicate on a predictable cadence
- **Leader engagement:** assign specific leadership accountabilities for individual reach-outs and for monitoring ramp up progress
- **Employee engagement:** ensure employees feel they can be heard and have mechanisms to provide input (e.g., pulse checks, social media tools)
- **Wellness offerings:** highlight existing offerings that employees can use and consider developing ad hoc / informal ones (e.g., tactics for stress management, financial planning tools, temporary childcare support)
- **Return to work supports:** utilize existing return to work processes (e.g., for leaves of absence) and be prepared to offer additional support to those who may be struggling with mental health concerns (e.g., on-site counselors, coaching); revisit sick leave policies and procedures and plan for continued absenteeism

Where to start?

The first thing we would suggest is to **assign a team**. Consider putting together a **cross-functional team** that is able to think through the various considerations, using a **fluid scenario-based approach** that **integrates data** from an **analytics platform**. Next, an organization should **prioritize the protocols and support** needed to most efficiently and effectively ramp back up and begin taking action where possible.

Contact:

For more information on how to respond, recover and thrive:

- Connect to Deloitte leaders www.deloitte.com/COVID-19-leaders
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