

The road to operational 'steady state'

Workforce health & safety

May 2020



The road to operational 'steady state'

Effective navigation of health and safety (H&S) considerations - for employees, customers and suppliers - is key to a successful return to operating with confidence following efforts to contain the COVID-19 virus through lockdown measures.

Initial crisis response efforts have seen many organisations steady themselves – responding with swift and scale action in extremely short timeframes.

Turning to the period ahead, whilst the scale of change is unlikely to relent, the experience from one organisation to another will be vastly different. Grocers and online retailers continue running at pace to provide enough bandwidth to meet customer demand, whilst the high street, manufacturing and hospitality businesses start to explore how they can take their next steps in

cranking up skeleton operations.

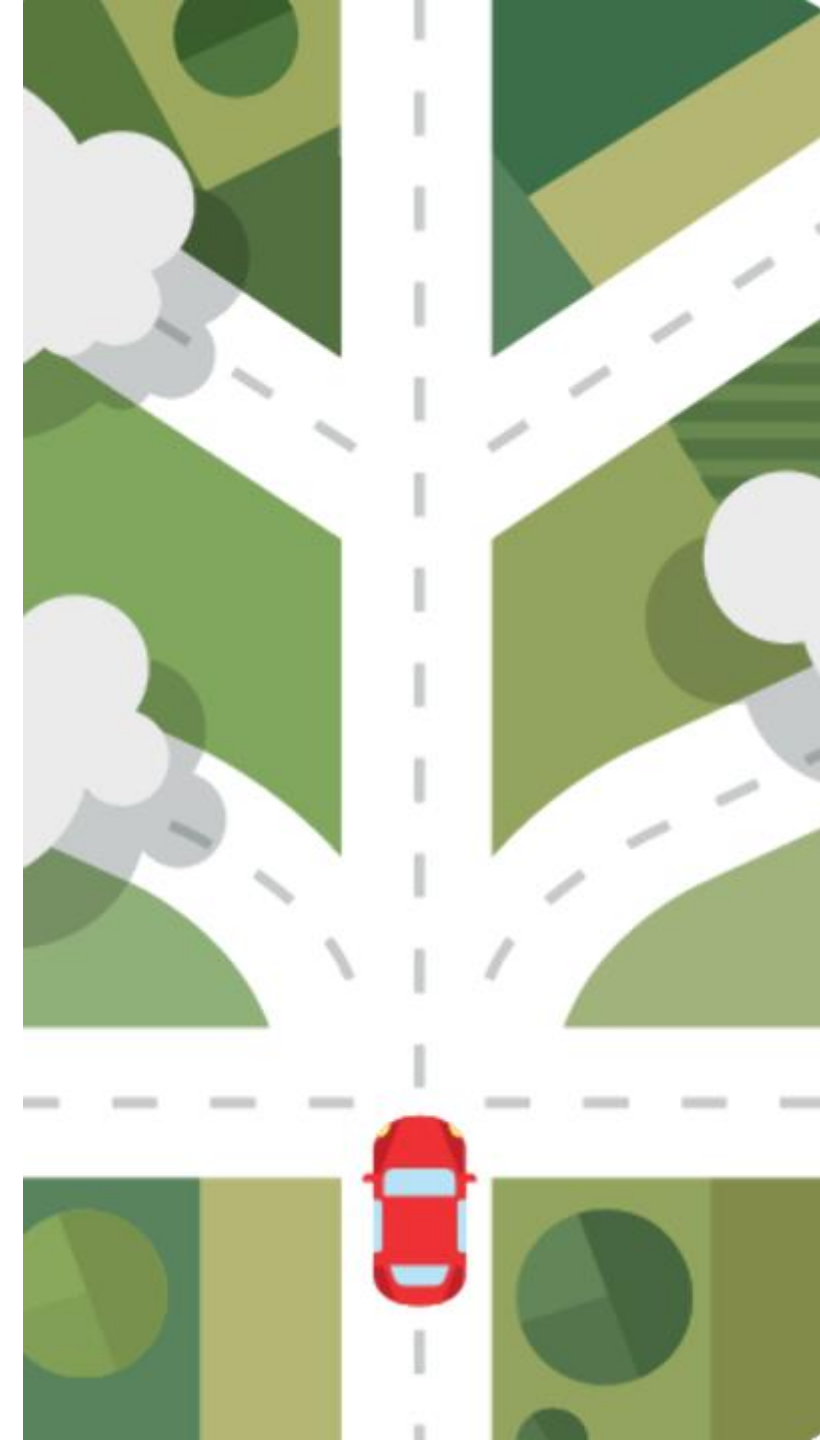
In all cases, workforce H&S will remain central to decision making and responsible operation.

And whilst under pre-COVID-19 circumstances, H&S would be accused of being a 'grey' topic. The lack of clarity today has been massively amplified by a need for organisations to make risk-based decisions, with little to no precedent, on how to keep their people (and by extension, customers) safe. Added to this COVID-19 is a threat that the world doesn't yet fully understand.

Notwithstanding the principle and new risk of infection, more traditional risks will be heightened as a direct consequence.

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Organisations will need to continually wrestle with and review their position against, two key questions:

- ▶ Based on what we know today, are we confident that our operations are not **exposing people to an increased risk** of COVID-19 infection?
- ▶ Whilst we operate under different conditions (e.g. reduced workforce, alternative practices, etc.) **do we understand, and are we controlling**, the impact on conventional workplace H&S risk?



The recovery phase will vary between organisations

As organisations begin to recover from the impact of the pandemic, they will likely experience different realities:

1

Recovering from 'lockdown' or reduced operations

Examples: Oil, homebuilding, restaurants, cafes, airlines, events and entertainment

2


Experiencing surging demand or a sudden change of direction


Examples: Food manufacturers, supermarkets, logistics firms and specialist manufacturers

As organisation's turn toward the recovery phase of their COVID-19 response, confidence that H&S risk can be managed well will be a keystone in enabling a progressive return to a future 'steady state'.


1 | Recovering from lockdown


People change → risk

 Work is likely to re-start with reduced (skeleton) teams. Individuals will be required to take on extra responsibilities – including activities in which they are less experienced.

 Organisations may move to rotational shift 'teams' or extended daily hours in a bid to restart production whilst reducing the risk of infection. Greater fatigue and individuals being exposed to higher doses/repetition of hazards, including chemicals and risks of strain resulting from manual handling.

Process change → risk

 Exceptional procedures will need to be designed to account for interim ways of working. New and rapidly changing ways of working will be challenging for employees to keep pace with and may result in unforeseen risks.

 Basic operational rules will need to be reviewed and perhaps revised to accommodate social distancing requirements. Some deeply engrained operational rules may need to be overridden due to the greater need for infection control, which needs to be carefully managed to avoid a wider erosion of standards.

Organisations need to pull hard on their best and brightest H&S experts to ensure they are deeply engaged in the enabling effort required to help the business navigate this period of change.

2 | Experiencing surging demand

People change → risk



A high number of 'new faces' (COVID-19 related recruits and temporary staff).

Diluted 'competency' across the workforce. The on-boarding/induction process may also need to be condensed to accommodate the increased volume of new starters.



Those new in role will likely have lower supervision than may be considered ideal.

Limited ability to seek the support of more experienced colleagues leading to a degradation of usually high standards of H&S or mistakes going uncorrected.

Process change → risk



New work environments are being set up at short notice, e.g. new temporary structures, re-purposing buildings, or reconfiguring production lines to make new products.

H&S risks not assessed at the same pace as operational change.



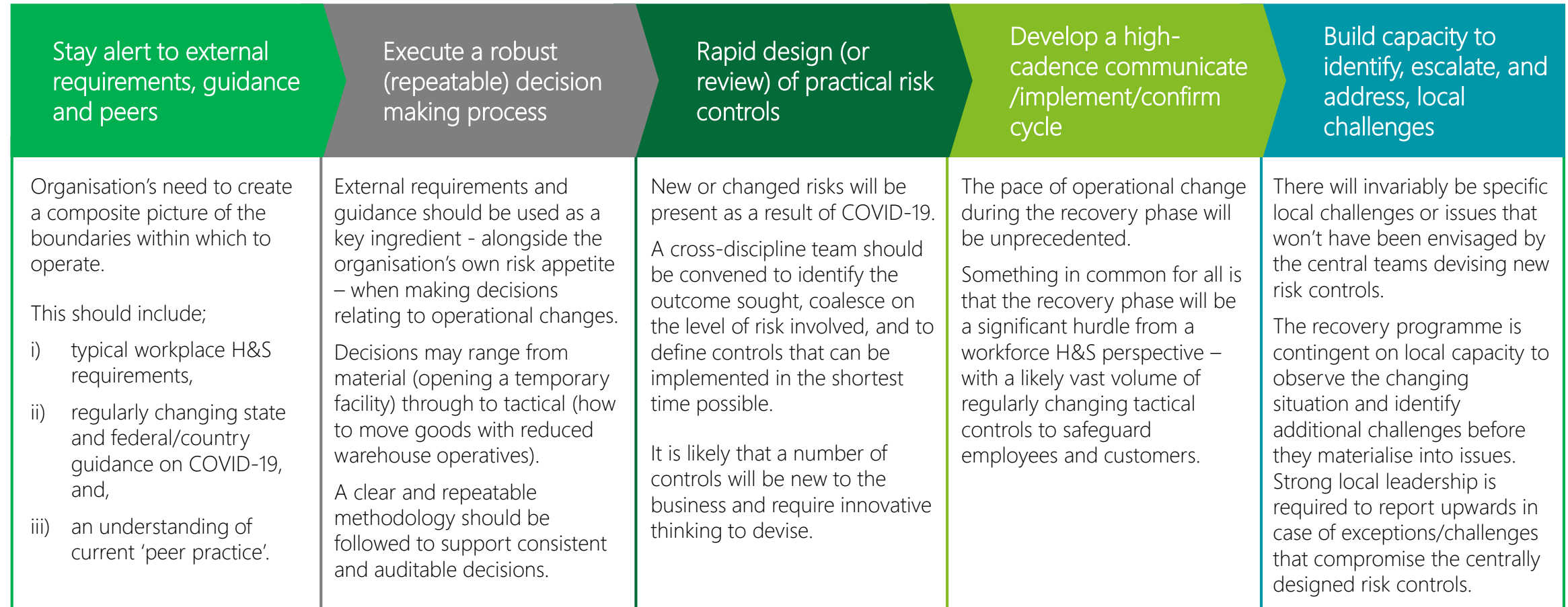
Higher than normal demand results in a stretch on the availability of necessary equipment.

Results in employees using sub-optimal methods to complete their work.

Central to delivering a high pace of change, is clarity over the H&S impact of those changes, and the ability to devise and implement practical risk controls.

A framework to navigate H&S during COVID-19 recovery

Key components to enable a sound approach to H&S risk during COVID-19 recovery



Get back up to speed, responsibly

As part of Deloitte's wider crisis and resilience capability, our H&S specialists can support you to navigate the 'recover phase' of your COVID-19 response.

1

Programme management

Integration with your crisis and business continuity team:

- Source and refresh external and industry guidance
- Design and oversee a workforce decision-making process
- Facilitate controls development, lending specialist input
- Standing up and running recurring cascade and action tracking
- Specialist resource to provide additional local bandwidth.

2

In flight review

We can give you confidence that workforce H&S isn't being compromised by:

- Reviewing your decision making process
- Providing specialist peer review over planned H&S controls prior to deployment
- Performing an in-flight review of the implementation and tracking process for interim control measures
- Through local validation, confirm that H&S exposures associated with COVID-19 or alternative operational practices, are being managed effectively.

Navigate H&S during COVID-19 recovery

Organisations that successfully navigate the recovery phase of their COVID-19 response will have acknowledged that some degree of risk needs to be present, whilst being confident that they have made sound decisions to:

- ▶ **Reduce the risk of infection** as far as is reasonable; and
- ▶ Take further action to **mitigate the consequential effects** of reduced operating conditions on 'normal' H&S risk topics.

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