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worldwide

A NEW ERA OF WORK WHAT TO CONSIDER TODAY & TOMORROW

hays.co.uk/lead-in-the-new-era



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As we all adapt to a new era of working, we hope this guide will support your plans. The pace of change has accelerated far quicker than we could have ever imagined and as leaders we need to pivot our organisations, so they are best equipped to respond to the opportunities.

As your lifelong partner, we remain committed to working together with you as the world of work evolves. We have compiled this guide to help employers navigate the current and future challenges. It is intended to prompt thoughtful discussion that will help guide your plans and allow you to devise solutions that will have a positive impact on your organisation.

The coronavirus has accelerated the adoption of a number of significant employment trends – and will continue to do so. All this change brings a number of challenges that leaders need to address – what the new models of working will be, what infrastructure changes are needed, whether the right skills are in place and how they’ll recruit and retain top talent.

Workforce expectations have also shifted rapidly in a short space of time. Employers will need to ensure their culture still speaks to their employees. They’ll need to re-evaluate their employer brand to ensure that their proposition will resonate with those people who can make a difference to the organisation. Those organisations that thrive will be those who respond to the changes most effectively and that continue to be clear and transparent in their communication.

The focus of this guide is to share what we have learnt and what will help employers get their workforce safely back to the workplace. We also aim to help shape your longer-term thinking around how operating models and approaches to operations, people, recruitment and technology may need to shift. It is based on insight from the organisations we speak to every day and our Hays experts.

We hope you find it useful and welcome a further discussion about how the guide could be applied to your organisation and your resourcing requirements.

Simon Winfield
Managing Director
Hays UK & Ireland

“ Those organisations that thrive will be those who respond to the changes most effectively and that continue to be clear and transparent in their communication. ”

THE WORLD OF WORK POST-COVID 19

NINE QUESTIONS I'M ASKING MYSELF



Alistair Cox
Chief Executive, Hays plc

COVID-19 has, in a matter of weeks, changed our world. As countries consider slowly easing lockdown restrictions, our CEO shares the nine practical questions he and our leadership team are asking themselves as we all look to move into a new era of work.

Our lives will never be the same again. I don't think that's an exaggeration, it's a fact. COVID-19 has already, in a matter of just a few weeks, completely changed our world. If you take a step back and really think about the magnitude and speed of what's happening around us, it's remarkable - we probably won't experience anything like it again in our lifetimes. It feels like a line has been drawn in the sand between life before the crisis, and life now and next - the before and the after.

As we prepare to enter a new era of work - what will change?

This is a very big question. It's one I'm sure many a business book and whitepaper will be written about, and many a lecture and webinar will cover for years to come. As I've said, I really think we will start to compartmentalise our lives in a 'before the crisis' and 'after the crisis' perspective, both from a personal and from a business perspective - the impact of that will be huge.

The scale of what is ahead of us is hard to imagine, although there are already tomes of slideware from experts prophesying the future. I'm not going to join that industry, saying that I can articulate how the world of work is likely to change. But what I can do is share with you some of the broader questions that are in my mind as I try to understand the true impact this pandemic will have on my own business, in the hope it might stimulate thinking as to how your own business might need to change.

So, here goes:

1. As a result of this crisis, our customers are changing - that means our organisations need to change too, and fast enough to remain relevant to our customer-base. We've already been shown by many forward-thinking organisations that a lightning-fast pivot is entirely possible. Take Formula 1, for example, who are sharing their expertise to help [design medical ventilators](#), Burberry turning their focus to [manufacturing gowns](#), teachers delivering lessons virtually, restaurants switching to provide home deliveries overnight, and, of course, the countless SME's who have flipped their businesses on their heads, to help serve their communities at this difficult time. Indeed, as [Dr Maggi Evans](#), says, "It has long been known that a crisis, or [sense of urgency](#) is a powerful catalyst for change and creativity." This crisis is no different. So, will we need to rethink our business model, or areas of strategic focus? How are the needs, wants and expectations of our customers going to change as result of this crisis? How will this impact the services we provide and the people we hire? Will the overriding purpose of our organisation still hold true in the new world? How will this impact our workforce planning? Will it create skills gaps that we'll need to address? Will existing jobs be disrupted or changed? Will new roles need to be created?
2. In a matter of a few short weeks, huge infrastructure has been put into place by almost every organisation on the planet, in super quick speed, to enable their employees around the world to work from home. This is an incredible feat, and one that is worth acknowledging. Who would have thought this would have even been possible pre-crisis? It's been incredible. So, will these sophisticated infrastructures remain in place (and be further developed) to allow for more

regular and consistent remote working going forward? If so, what does this mean for the hiring, onboarding, training, and performance management of our people? What does it mean for workspace planning if people's roles do not require 5 days a week in an office? Maybe most importantly, how will we maintain our strong company culture if a large proportion of our workforce is "away" at any point in time?

3. The pace of automation and digitalisation has increased in many industries during the crisis, with many planning to ramp up activity in the future. In fact, a survey by [EY](#) found that 41% of respondents "said they were investing in accelerating automation as businesses prepared for a post-crisis world." How will this trend manifest itself, and how will it impact the existing roles and skills within our business and those of our customers? Will the way we deliver our services look the same? It's clear to see that the pandemic has changed consumer behaviour in this respect, with many examples of people preferring digitalised services rather than face-to-face interaction, as this [Financial Times article](#) explores.
4. It's been truly heart-warming to see the outpourings of gratitude around the world for the key workers, who, just a few weeks ago, were often taken for granted, operating under the radar and under-appreciated. This crisis has really emphasised their true value to our societies. After all, they have contributed the most important job imaginable - saving lives but in doing so exposing themselves to dangerous situations. I'm of course talking about health and social care workers, but also the refuse collectors, cleaners, supermarket workers, lorry and bus drivers, the list goes on. So, will this pandemic lead us to question our internal definition of exactly what the most 'valuable roles' really are within our societies?

5. This crisis is changing the long-standing values, attitudes and perspectives of many. In fact, according to [Reuters](#), a study in China found that the “Coronavirus outbreak has led to a shift in attitudes...with less tolerance of individualistic behaviour and a greater tendency to recognise the contributions of others.” How will this impact their perception of work? Will people be more inclined to work for purpose-driven organisations and seek more meaning in their work?
6. According to the [World Economic Forum](#), as of March 2020, over a billion students were currently unable to go to school or university. Depending on how long this crisis goes on for, could the potential disruption to the education sector cause long-term skills shortages for our organisation in the future? What can we do to mitigate that? The world faced a skills and lifelong learning crisis before COVID-19. With the rise of mass unemployment in many countries and a further shift in skills required by organisations, how will we tackle the need to enable people to access the skills training they will need to adapt their own careers to the new world?
7. How will we acknowledge the many shining stars who have come to the fore during this crisis and delivered real value? These people may have gone somewhat ‘under the radar’ pre-crisis, so how can you acknowledge their input and accelerate their development going forward? Has the crisis made us re-evaluate traditional measures of value within our organisations?

“What can we do as leaders, to ensure our people work in an agile, adaptive, collaborative and resilient way?”

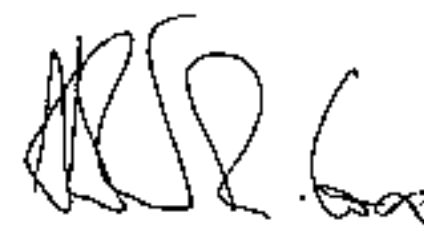
8. The crisis has shown us that huge, seemingly unimaginable events are possible (and they are likely to happen again, just in different forms, for example cyber-attacks, environmental disaster), so how do we future-proof both our products and services, and our people with that in mind? What can we do as leaders, to ensure our people work in an agile, adaptive, collaborative and resilient way? How do we think about the capital structure of our business and what should be the balance of emphasis across all stakeholders, whether they be owners, employees, customers, suppliers or the communities we work in?
9. During this time, many of our employees will have experienced more autonomy in their roles, being given permission to craft their routines in a meaningful way that works for them. How do we facilitate this positive trend going forward to ensure their potential is being reached? As

this [Harvard Business Review](#) article states: “With jobs at the heart of how work gets done, leaders have an unprecedented opportunity to re-imagine them by rearranging work and having employees take on different responsibilities to better respond to the evolving needs of their organisations, customers and employees.”

Of course, the impact of this crisis on each individual organisation will be different, with much of that impact hard to predict. It is a volatile and varied world out there, with some industries experiencing a backlog of demand including for example, the beauty industry, dentists, parts of retail. Sadly, the same prospects might not exist for other industries, as [Erik Gordon, a Professor at the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business](#) states.

But, while nothing is certain right now, what we do know for sure is that there will be a tomorrow, and that tomorrow will provide each of our organisations with opportunity, if we look hard enough for it, and ask ourselves the right questions, difficult though they may be. The winners will be those who do a proper and thoughtful job at that deep analysis of what, why, how and who. The losers will be those that simply wait for everything to come back as before.

So, what questions are you as a leader asking yourself right now? As I said, I think now is the time we must all come together as a global business community to ensure we can get the world of work back up and running in the safest and most effective way possible, balancing short term health concerns with the longer term need to have a vibrant economy that provides livelihoods and pays the taxes that support the public services we so obviously need. In more ways than one, this has been a global social experiment, so let’s all share what we’ve learnt along the way, to help us better prepare for whatever is around the corner next.



Alistair Cox
Chief Executive
Hays plc

OPERATIONS

How might business operations need to change if new models of working emerge?

In this section we cover:

- What you need to consider when planning for a return to the workplace
- How you can start to plan for the future world of work

“How we respond to the pandemic is a test of company resilience. Now, as we plan for some of our employees to transition back into the workplace, we realise that some of our former working practices will need to change. Determining how we respond is not just the HR department’s responsibility. It must be a joint effort across operations, technology, health and safety and of course be underpinned by strong leadership. Here at Hays, we’ve set up both global and local teams that meet weekly to coordinate our efforts to effectively manage this ever-changing crisis.”

Trisha Brookes, Director of People & Culture, Hays UK&I



OPERATIONS CONSIDERATIONS FOR NOW

As lockdown eases, many companies will be considering a phased return to the workplace.

Preparing the workplace

The first question for many is how to return to the workplace. Pay close attention to government guidelines and start to build your business continuity plan around this. Our checklist provides a starting point for some of the areas you may want to consider. Maintaining the health and safety of your employees should continue to be your top priority, so you'll need to think about how you will maintain social distancing guidelines.

Working arrangements

As part of your plan you should consider what the transition from remote working back to the workplace needs to look like for your organisation. You'll need to have the right policies in place to support this.

“ You will also need to ensure that any changes to working practices and health and safety protocols are well understood by your employees. ”

Communications

Communication to your staff during this period should remain frequent and clear to ensure transparency amongst the workforce. It should be the role of your leadership team and managers to cascade and reinforce critical information and key updates.

You will also need to ensure that any changes to working practices and health and safety protocols are well understood by your employees.

Useful resources

[Latest government updates ▶](#)

[Government advice for different industries, sectors and workplace and environments ▶](#)

CHECKLIST

Hygiene, health and safety

- i. Preparing the workplace
 - Set clear policies for social distancing in the workplace
 - Consider limiting use of lifts and shared areas
 - Establish daily cleaning procedures as required
 - Provide adequate cleaning supplies
 - Promote mandatory health and hygiene protocols (e.g. hand washing, mask use, glove use) for employees (PPE use)
 - Discontinue use of shared items (e.g. phones, computers and mugs)
 - Provide supplies, such as hand sanitisers, masks and gloves
- ii. Set clear policies for access control
 - Set clear policies for workplace or site access, working with facilities management to agree these
 - Track and document all building entries and exits
 - Consider updating risk assessments to include COVID-19 in the workplace; this will reassure employees, suppliers and customers
 - Consider taking a body temperature reading at building or site entry
 - Set guidelines for employee quarantine when any COVID-19 symptoms are apparent in line with government guidance
- iii. Occupational health and safety
 - Evolve occupational health support for remote workers
- iv. Travel and commuting
 - Set clear guidelines when commuting to and from work, particularly with regards to public transport use
 - Consider how to deal with employees who feel that travelling to work poses an imminent risk to their health
 - Review your travel policies

Working arrangements

- i. Working arrangements and shift planning
 - Create differentiated shift plans or working arrangements as necessary to ease congestion on work premises
 - Consider workplace design and office layout to ensure minimum advised social distances are adhered to
 - Identify and isolate vulnerable employee groups

- ii. Remote working
 - Consider encouraging continued remote working for all roles that do not require a physical presence
 - Provide webinars and insightful resources on remote working and leadership best practices, such as wellbeing support

Business continuity plans (BCP)

- i. Evolve BCP with lessons learned from COVID-19
 - Define contingency plans for further workplace closures
- ii. Technology
 - Ensure cyber-security/data compliance of all IT systems
 - Assess technology training needs for staff

HR policies

- i. Refer to government and national public health protocols and guidelines for the latest advice
- ii. Review and update relevant HR policies. These may include:
 - Flexible working
 - Employee assistance
 - Leave and sickness
 - Contractual hours
 - Health and safety - social distancing addendum
 - Technology policy - Bring Your Own Device etc

Communications

- i. Communicate regularly with employees
 - Don't forget to communicate to furloughed employees
 - Provide a mechanism for feedback either directly, through a union or employment group
- ii. Ensure national public health protocols and guidelines inform employee communication
 - Educate employees on COVID-19 symptoms and preventative measures
- iii. Communicate regularly about why any changes are being made

Please note: this is a guide checklist and should be tailored to the specific needs of your organisation.

OPERATIONS CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

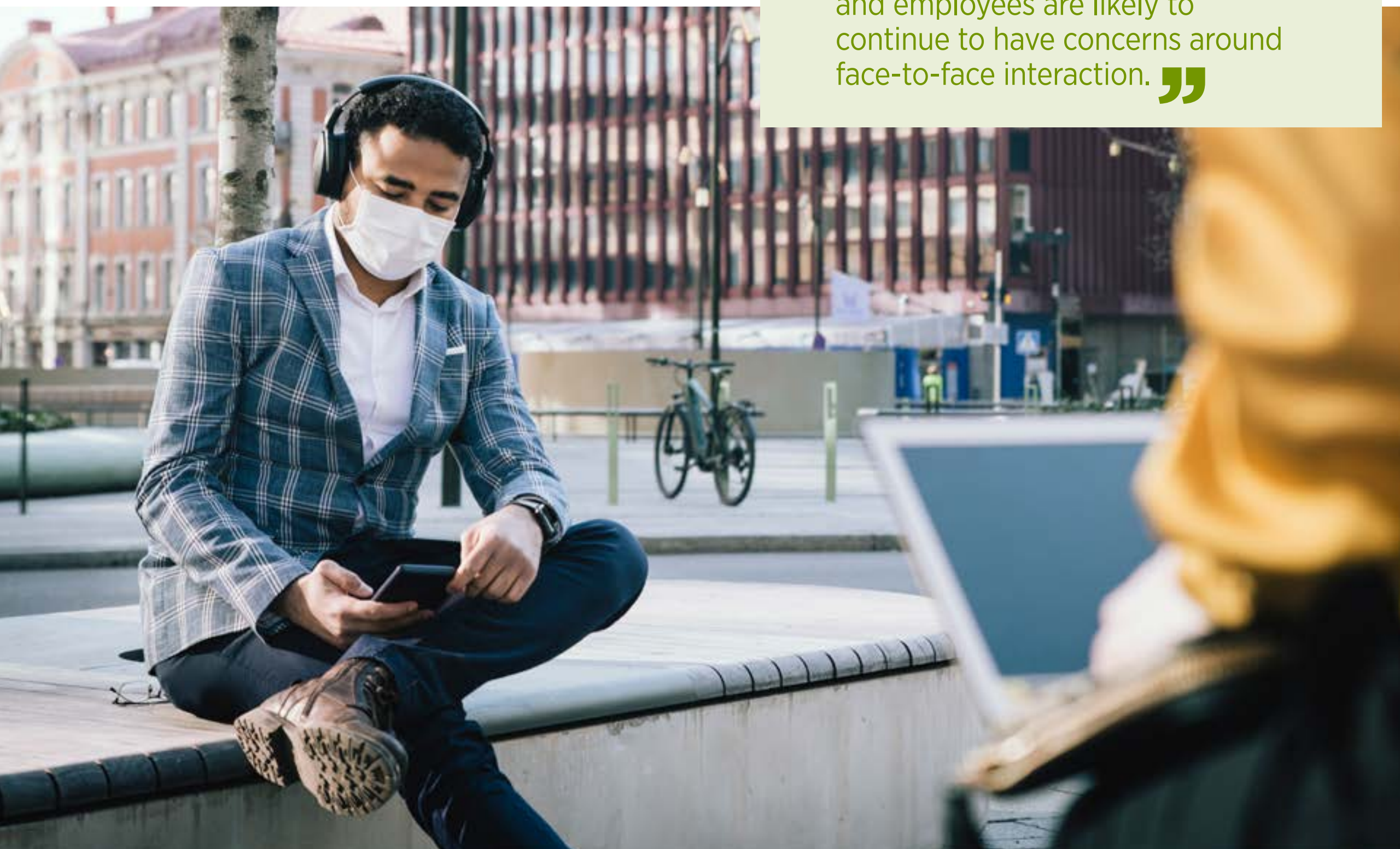
Employers should start assessing how they might redesign their operating models to best suit the needs of their employees and customers in this new world.

The agility that has emerged in response to this pandemic should be preserved and nurtured for the future, so how does this map out across your infrastructure changes? What else should you invest in to keep that momentum?

Once social distancing measures begin to relax, your customers and employees are likely to continue to have concerns around face-to-face interaction.

Perhaps you have already taken some of your business operations online – how much further do you need to evolve customer engagement to make way for a digital experience with a personal touch?

“Once social distancing measures begin to relax, your customers and employees are likely to continue to have concerns around face-to-face interaction.”



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN EVOLVING YOUR STAFF AND CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS

1. Are your working arrangements agile enough to cope with any future changes?
2. What flexible working arrangements do you have in place and what will your workforce want?
3. How will occupational health support need to evolve to facilitate the health and safety of workers?
4. Can your digital and technology infrastructure sustain any changes to the number of virtual and onsite teams?
5. How will you adjust your infrastructure and technology to support the new norms of engagement, collaboration and communication?
6. How will you communicate effectively – will there be more investment required in the use of digital tools and platforms?
7. How will you need to evolve your engagement models with key stakeholders to make way for a digital experience with a personal touch?
8. How will you decide what engagements warrant face-to-face physical interaction and which don't?
9. How will you harness feedback from your customers and users to enable product development or service enhancements?
10. How will your organisation update its BCP plans with lessons learned from COVID-19?
11. Will your organisation's supply chain need further changes? Is it too inflexible, dependent on too few suppliers or regions?
12. What will your workforce look like in the future? What skills will you need to hire for or can you re-skill existing employees? (see [recruitment section](#))

“Organisations need to consider how they can prepare their workplaces before any workers return. Some relatively simple changes to workspaces can minimise the transmission of the virus, for example, with health & safety audits on work premises, and the right levels of PPE and sanitation available to all staff. Medium-term planning may include things like workplace design and policy changes to govern flexible and remote working practices, as many organisations will be assessing just how much of their workforce they need 'onsite' at any single point.”

Trisha Brookes, Director of People & Culture, Hays UK&I

PEOPLE

In this section we cover the possible effects on current employees as organisations enter the new era of work, both now and into the future.

Topics include:

- Employee health and wellbeing
- Employee retention and maintaining morale
- The need for effective internal communication
- Importance of learning and development

“During this pandemic, work solutions that are conducive to supporting the diversity and inclusion agenda have been actioned under accelerated circumstances. Instead of rushing to return to ‘former practices’, employers now have an opportunity to take the time to reflect and decide what to continue with and how best to integrate them into new working practices.”

Yvonne Smyth, Group Head of Diversity & Inclusion, Hays



PEOPLE CONSIDERATIONS FOR NOW

The sudden shift in working arrangements as a result of COVID-19 has inevitably impacted your workforce. Wellbeing has never been more important and it has placed far greater emphasis on having a clear and transparent communications strategy to ensure you can maintain a healthy, engaged and motivated workforce.

Culture, health and wellbeing

Your employees will have varied experiences of COVID-19 that you'll need to be understanding of, including:

- Concerns about the health and wellbeing of themselves and loved ones
- The anxiety that may be caused by reduced social contact, being furloughed or concerns over job security, financial pressures, and general business uncertainty
- Harrowing experiences from working on the front lines, or providing care for a loved one
- The difficulties of juggling childcare and work

Provide support by:

- Acknowledging their fears and reassuring them about the measures being implemented to protect them
- Signposting access to mental health support and employee assistance programmes available
- Clear, transparent and regular communication

Refer to our checklist on the following page for some ideas.

Working arrangements

You should continue to support your employees throughout. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it will help to ensure they remain positive and productive, regardless of their working arrangements.

Use the time now to get feedback from your employees about what has and hasn't worked well during this period. Their input will help you identify barriers that need resolving to enable future hybrid teams of those in workplace settings and those working remotely to work cohesively and productively.

“Some members of your management teams may be equally concerned about returning to the workplace, so you'll need to work closely with them to agree a suitable approach.”

Leadership and management

Your leaders and managers may have stepped up almost overnight as the pandemic took hold, but as you plan for your return to work you need to support them to ensure they are equipped to further lead the changes.

Identify what you need from your leaders in this next phase and provide them with the training required. This should include topics such as hybrid team management and effective communications. You should also provide them with resources, including your updated HR and working policies, as soon as possible to help them facilitate a safe return to the workplace.

If any skills shortages have come to the fore during the lockdown period, evaluate your hiring plans for the coming months to ensure you and your team will be in a strong position for the ongoing changes.

Communications

Ensure that your communication with employees demonstrates trust and assurance that you have their best interests (health, safety and wellbeing) at heart, while setting clear expectations on roles, responsibilities and protocols during times of change.*

Any major change in working practices that you choose to implement should be supported with strategic internal communications to staff that clearly demonstrate why the changes are needed.

HOW TO INTRODUCE CHANGE

No matter who they are, when faced with change people go through a cycle of emotions before accepting a new normal. How you communicate and support your team during the early stages of a change will set the tone for how successful it will be in the longer term. When introducing a change to your wider workforce, remember to:

- Listen, then listen some more – acknowledge people's anxieties whilst also gently supplying them with the information they need to put their immediate fears into context and dispel unhelpful rumours and myths.
- Only say that you know to be true, but do it as speedily as possible – supply your team with as much information as you can making use of all channels you have – distribute videos internally providing business updates and send emails clearly explaining your reasoning.
- Make clear what support is available – make use of any employee assistance programmes you have available which could be anything from financial or legal advice to the provision of mental health support services. These allow your team to come to terms with the change and reach out for help in their own time.

[Read our guide to leading your team through change successfully](#), which provides further practical advice to help you to navigate changes gracefully, efficiently and, most importantly, with the wellbeing of your employees in mind.

*Note if implementing changes that will have lasting effects, please consider using change management strategies and techniques.

CHECKLIST

Culture, health and wellbeing

- i. Focus on building a culture based on trust and transparency
 - Encourage leaders to follow a people first approach
 - Provide leaders with the tools and training to lead in times of change
- ii. Mental health
 - Consider mental health/employee assistance support for employees in key scenarios such as:
 - bereavement support
 - post-traumatic stress disorder counselling and support
 - financial support
 - anxiety support

Working arrangements

- i. Encourage managers to schedule informal meetings without a fixed agenda to check in with team members and enable a smooth transition out of lockdown
- ii. Consider training needs or resources required for managers to effectively manage hybrid teams, such as daily routines, protocols for staff on calls in and out of the workplace, dealing with personal requests etc.
- iii. Evaluate the benefits and challenges of remote working in your organisation and how to factor this into your plans and policies
- iv. Review and reassess your employee mobility strategy
- v. Evaluate whether you need to make any amendments to contracts as a result of changes to working arrangements
- vi. Ensure your team members are equipped with the skills and tools they need to work in these new hybrid teams effectively – visit [Hays Thrive](#) for free online training

Communications

- i. Ensure national public health protocols and guidelines inform employee communication
- ii. Ensure communication reinforces a people first approach
 - Ensure that employees are aware of any changes to HR policies and are engaged with the overall business approach
 - Build trust in the decisions that are being made, by being transparent and clear about the reasons behind them
 - HR and Marketing should work closely together at this time to create a strong, company-wide narrative

Learning & development

- i. Identify the short-term training needed for your leaders, managers and employees. If it is new, empower them to work in hybrid teams. Direct them to useful resources, such as [Hays Thrive](#) to support learning and development
- ii. Start planning for your longer-term learning and development requirements
 - Identify areas where employees need upskilling, both now and for the future, such as technology and digital skills
 - What training platforms do you need to invest in (such as e-learning) and what modules need to be created?
 - Incorporate agile and digital talent upskilling and reskilling into your learning strategy
 - Create training to upskill employees in soft skills like resilience, adaptability, and other traits (for example, personal growth) that strengthen your organisation's DNA

“Inclusion is more important than ever. Many employees are facing anxiety, stress and uncertainty and are looking to their leaders to provide support and guidance. How employers respond today and in the weeks ahead will have a profound impact on how they are perceived post-crisis. Employers’ responsibility should extend into offering mental health and wellbeing support that most employees are seeking.

“Leaders and managers should ensure that communication to employees is purposefully inclusive, regular and transparent. Employees who have family and care-giving commitments or long commutes, which severely impact on their desire for work-life balance, may not be inclined to work for employers that do not offer flexibility. Many will now have increasing evidence that they can perform their roles effectively while working remotely. The way employers respond to remote and flexible working requests will therefore impact talent acquisition and retention.

“We now have the opportunity purposefully build a culture of inclusion, trust and assurance. The workforce will want to feel supported and trusted to do the right thing, and employers must be prepared to integrate this into their future policies and ways of working.”

Yvonne Smyth, Group Head of Diversity & Inclusion, Hays



Please note: this is a guide checklist and should be tailored to the specific needs of your organisation.

PEOPLE CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Organisations have an opportunity to build a culture where new working regimes and working patterns are the norm and not the exception. As the digital and physical world of work collide, how will you manage, motivate, and retain your workforce in the new era?

Longer-term working arrangements and options will raise new questions, not least the impact on your culture, employer brand and value proposition. Many of these aspects used to be based on the advantages of pleasant working environments, location and the benefits of collaborative working face-to-face, but the needs of the workforce will be different.

This crisis has already resulted in developments in telemedicine, the rise of virtual exercise classes and a much deeper understanding of mental health.

The lines between an employer's duty of care and employees' wellbeing will become ever more blurred and workers may start to expect more support from you in these areas.

Remuneration and reward approaches may also need to evolve, and if hybrid teams become commonplace, how will you encourage innovation?

The questions on the right may help you consider how to evolve your people and culture strategies if you decide to adopt new working styles.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN ASSESSING YOUR PEOPLE & CULTURE

1. How will you continue to build a culture against a backdrop of social distancing?
2. How can you drive a 'software' mindset amongst your teams so they remain agile and adaptable to change?
3. How will you manage a hybrid workforce that is more dispersed, partly remote and partly on-site?
4. What initiatives can you put in place to build a more engaged workforce?
5. What investments in technology and training will you have to make to enable your workforce to thrive in the new era of work?
6. How do your internal communications channels need to evolve? Will you need to invest in more digital engagement and collaboration tools to promote inclusion within your workforce?
7. How will the longer-term decisions you make relating to your workforce now impact your employee value proposition, if the workplace environment was once a USP?
8. What technical and soft skills will your workforce need in the future? Are there any skills gaps that will require you to expand your workforce?
9. How will you train and upskill a dispersed workforce? Will you need to invest further in technologies to support this?
10. How do your wellbeing programmes need to evolve?

“ The lines between an employer's duty of care and employees' wellbeing will become ever more blurred and workers may start to expect more support from you in these areas. ”



RECRUITMENT

How has COVID-19 impacted the skills you need in your organisation now and tomorrow? How will your recruitment plans need to change to handle this new era of work?

In this section we share insights to help you answer these vital questions.

“The future is unknown but employers should make use of the data available to them. By assessing sales, productivity and output across business units, as well as broader industry-specific trends, employers should be able to make a judgement call around their short to mid-term workforce requirements. As the market improves, contingent workers will be in demand for the flexibility and specialist skills they are able to offer.”

Roddy Adair, National Specialist Director, Hays UK&I



RECRUITMENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR NOW

Organisations have two main talent challenges – one is preserving their current workforce, with a focus on furlough and the second is ensuring that they have the right skills and professionals in place for the longer-term.

Workforce planning

You should use the time now to assess the skills needed for what your organisation will look like coming out of the crisis. This may include hiring for new permanent skill sets and making use of a contingent workforce as operating models shift.

- As organisations emerge from the crisis, you will need to be able to attract and hire key skills as quickly as possible, while adhering to compliance requirements.
- Alternatively, you may see peaks and troughs in your business that will continue to be hard to predict, which may require you to hire temporary or contract workers to meet these demands.
- Contingency plans should also be in place for furloughed staff. These should take into account the possibility of redeployment to other roles, as well as attrition.

“ You should use the time now to assess the skills needed for what your organisation will look like coming out of the crisis. This may include hiring for new permanent skill sets and making use of a contingent workforce as operating models shift. ”

Regardless of which stage your organisation is at in terms of recovery, demand for niche or emerging skills will remain.

Starting now to assess for the skills you'll require will ensure that, when your organisation is ready, you'll have access to the talent needed to deliver on organisational changes or respond to market opportunities. Refer to the checklist on the following page to help build your plan.

How to assess skills gaps and identify critical hires

The skills in demand are changing rapidly in response to shifting operating models and the economic and social pressures resulting from the pandemic. You should look urgently at your own circumstances to identify critical roles. As many organisations move to more online working models, skills demands in areas such as IT are likely to exacerbate.

Some other examples include:

- As retailers focus on e-commerce models, there is an increased requirement for digital skills across both marketing and technology. This includes software developers, data scientists, cloud infrastructure specialists, digital marketing and UX/UI specialists.
- Increase in hiring for IT security roles across all organisations, as employers look to set up and defend infrastructure to support continued remote working.

- With more pressure on our public services, we see an increased requirement to hire both permanent and temporary social care and health care workers as well as back office and technical staff.
- As the country gets back to their places of work, those working in maintenance trades will be needed to ensure buildings that may have stood idle are safe, clean and operationally sound.
- The expected rise of new legislation and changes to operating procedures that will need to be implemented within organisations as we shift to a new way of working will increase demand for legal professionals and also for change management experts to communicate the changes to the wider organisation.
- There will be demand for construction workers from a range of disciplines as projects that may have been delayed begin again.
- Demand for telephone and online customer service contact staff across all industries.
- To fulfil the nation's requirement for critical supplies, such as food and medical equipment, there is more pressure than ever on the manufacturing and supply chain industry.
- There is a surge in demand for both permanent and interim HR professionals, particularly for SMEs who need expert support as they manage their workforces through the changes ahead.

“The majority of employers are optimistic about their permanent hiring plans. Although we have had hundreds of candidates start new permanent roles in lockdown, some organisations are preferring to start recruitment now for a later start date. The main reason for this is to give HR departments the breathing space to deal with furloughed employees and get their existing workforce safely back to work. Employers and candidates alike are embracing technology for online interviewing.”

Gaelle Blake, Director Permanent Appointments, Hays UK&I

Your recruitment process

Until social distancing measures ease, your recruitment processes and protocols will need to remain virtual.

If you've already set some of this up, now is the time to review how it's working to ensure you can progress candidates through your process. If you've yet to address this, our checklist on the right will help you to adjust your recruitment and attraction processes and protocols to suit your new operations.

Areas you may want to look at include:

Advertising roles

- Refer to working arrangements and shift patterns in all of your job descriptions, advertising and recruitment websites.
- Explicitly state what working equipment will be provided to candidates if they are expected to work remotely.

Dealing with applications

- Ensure that your organisation is set up to receive online applications, and review connectivity and compliance of your applicant tracking system to other new tools that you may have added to your suite of recruitment tools (see [technology section](#)).
- Ensure that your hiring managers are enabled to review applications swiftly. This may include the ability to send and read CVs online and via smartphones, for those without access to printers when working from home.

“ Work closely with your IT department to ensure that it is possible to virtually (and quickly) onboard your new starters. This will help you provide a seamless and consistent employee experience. ”

Interviewing candidates

- Ensure that all hiring managers receive the right support and training to run effective virtual interviews. You can refer to our checklist on the right for some useful training and resources.

Onboarding new starters

- Work closely with your IT department to ensure that it is possible to virtually (and quickly) onboard your new starters. This will help you provide a seamless and consistent employee experience. You may need to consider investing in or upgrading technology platforms to facilitate this.
- You should also put together a robust digital induction programme for new starters to ensure they receive the same level of support.

Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

Consider how your EVP will need to evolve for the new era of work. Get feedback from your staff about what aspects matter most to them, as well as what they've enjoyed and what's worked well. Ask about their wellbeing and personal development needs. This won't give you all the answers but will help to form your thinking on how your EVP may need to adapt.

CHECKLIST

Workforce planning

- Assess your short-to mid-term workforce requirements for the future, including:
 - The skills you will need post lockdown
 - Contingency plans for furloughed staff (redeploy, redundancy, attrition)
 - Identify important skill sets and critical hires now
 - Seek approval for critical hires now and start the hiring process
 - Consider making use of a contingent workforce
- Work with your expert Hays recruiter to understand the latest market updates for your sector/industry
- Look at which areas of your organisation may see a surge or dip in demand and output, and plan your resources effectively

Recruitment process

- Decide the changes you need to make to your current recruitment process to enable you to attract and hire the best talent quickly
 - Decide which roles can be done remotely and consider this when advertising for new roles
 - Ensure your hiring managers have the tools to review online applications
 - Confirm that all your tools and technology used for recruitment connect to your ATS and any other required systems
 - Ensure your hiring managers have the right training and technology to perform virtual interviews
 - Confirm your ability to onboard and induct new starters
 - Review other digital tools for your hiring processes to improve efficiencies

Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

- Consider how longer-term changes to working arrangements and business operations will impact your EVP

Please note: this is a guide checklist and should be tailored to the specific needs of your organisation.

RECRUITMENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Employers should start to look holistically at how their operating model may continue to evolve in the new era and what the knock-on effect of this will be on the workforce and skills they require?

Being able to decide how you want to bring back your workforce and what working arrangements you will offer in the future will really help to shape this thinking. A more dispersed workforce will mean you can access talent from wider geographic locations and so you will need to evolve your recruitment messaging accordingly.

The rate of digitisation has rapidly increased, but how else will this impact your business operations? You'll need additional technology and IT skills to support this ongoing investment. How will your organisation access and hire for the technology skills required?

How will the way you interview and assess candidates need to evolve? Will the future outlook mean investment in more sophisticated technologies such as VR to improve the candidate experience?

As you think about the agility and other soft skills that are needed to operate in the future, does this mean a shift in candidate assessment for evaluation of soft skills, such as resilience, adaptability, problem-solving and team-working?

Looking into the mid-term, have you considered if there will be skills shortages? These are present in so many industries and addressing these sooner might help you to fill these gaps while talent is more readily available.

This crisis may have shaped your future needs unexpectedly, but it doesn't have to define your business. As you consider your staffing and hiring position, the questions below may help.

1. Does your organisation want to offer more or less flexibility to employees in the future?
2. Has the geographic location requirement of roles in your business changed?
3. How does your employer value proposition and employer branding material need to evolve to maintain competitiveness if workplace arrangements are permanently changed?
4. What skills will you need in your workforce?
5. What areas need a strategic talent roadmap, for example, IT?
6. Will you want to hire more gig workers and make greater use of a contingent workforce to address skills gaps?
7. What soft skills will you need to assess candidates against when hiring?



“Employers should stop and think about both their current and future workforce, to consciously learn what has worked well during the COVID-19 response, and to crucially identify offerings that will resonate in the future. To do this, they could informally interview workers and talk candidly with managers to identify changing wants and expectations, look holistically at how the company’s operating model will evolve in the future and put in place a talent strategy that supports these changes.

“Talent pools may become less geographically bound, opening up opportunities to both workers and employers. How you treat your workforce today will impact your employee value proposition of tomorrow. For example, the Hays Salary & Recruiting Trends Guide 2020 identified that work-life balance, including flexible working, was most important to 31% of candidates when considering a new position, however only 21% of employers considered this as their most important attraction tool, aside from salary, allowing them a strong competitive advantage when attracting top talent. Moving forwards, this alone is unlikely to be a differentiator once it’s more widely adopted. Employee expectations are going to shift, with more of a focus on personal development, and commitment to social purpose.

“Employers that can think ahead in this way will be able to maintain a competitive advantage and be best equipped to create a compelling Employee Value Proposition, so they can be seen as an employer of choice.”

Lucy Palmer, Head of Client Engagement, Hays UK&I



TECHNOLOGY

The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed many employers to fast-track their digital transformation. Those that can take any lessons learned and strengthen their business models will be ahead of their competition.

In this section we cover the need to review current technology and provide guidance to help you plan for future requirements.

“COVID-19 has forced change that many organisations have spent years discussing - a change in how we work and the speed at which technology has been adopted for different work processes. However, the opportunity is less about the technology itself and more about the psychology of being able to adopt an ‘agile’ mindset and maintain an openness towards further change. It will require managers to put their trust in their staff, place less emphasis on which hours are being worked and focus more on outputs delivered.”

Christiaan Cumine, Director of Systems & Change, Hays UK&I

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR NOW

Employers have accelerated infrastructure enhancements (both hardware and systems) to enable remote working on a larger scale and are using tools for engagement and collaboration more widely.

Assessment of tools used

There will likely be a range of tools now being used by a greater number of users in your business for different purposes, by different user groups or departments.

Examples of use might include:

- Monthly board meetings or weekly meetings run on Teams.
- Virtual pitches with prospects using webinars and digital demos.
- Team collaboration using the Office 365 suite and instant messaging platforms, such as Slack.

There are some immediate actions which will help you to decide on the best course of action:

- Get feedback from different users and departments, find out what tools they used and how they worked for them.
- Decide which tools should be retained for the future and which employees will require access to them.
- Start thinking about the IT security and compliance infrastructure needed to support these new tools in your wider digital ecosystem.
- Start planning for how these tools will integrate into your existing processes.

“ Get feedback from different users and departments, find out what tools they used and how they worked for them. ”

Assess your infrastructure

Although remote working tools may have operated well, has the supporting technology architecture been stable, expandable and flexible? Did your security and compliance protocols take a back seat in the haste to implement remote working on a large scale?

As you prepare for a return to work, take the time to audit the new structure, both in its own right and in how it connects with legacy systems.

You should also ensure that you have the right level of IT support available to meet the requirements of any new working arrangements. For example, you may need to offer an extended timetable of support hours or include coverage for different tools. If IT support is outsourced to a provider, review contracts to ensure they are still fit for purpose.

The checklist on the right provides some practical guidance for employers to follow in this area.

CHECKLIST

Assessment of tools

- i. Review the tools and technology you have used to facilitate remote working during the pandemic and gather feedback from key users
- ii. Assess and decide what your technology suite for the future looks like

Investment

- i. Assess the resources and costs required for newly deployed technology to connect/integrate with existing company systems and operations
- ii. Assess the requirements for IT support during this new way of working. Your organisation may need to offer additional or different support coverage to staff working at home

Security

- i. Audit and assess new tools against cyber security/data protection/data security, to ensure seamless integration into existing IT infrastructure
- ii. Ensure that workplace technology, such as PCs and networks left idle during the crisis, are updated with the latest anti-virus software for return to work
- iii. Ensure cyber security/data compliance of all IT systems

Policies and frameworks

- i. Work closely with HR to update technology policies and frameworks that provide governance to employees concerning the correct use of approved technology, software and websites such as social media
- ii. Does your technology policy need updating; for example, concerning Bring Your Own Device?
- iii. Do any of your other policies need updating to cover technology use and workstation set up for remote workers?
- iv. Ensure employees are reminded of best practice when it comes to maintaining the security of systems and data when working remotely, for example, through e-learning modules

Training

- i. Put in place adequate technical support, training and troubleshooting
- ii. Assess technology training needs for staff

Connectivity and playbooks

- i. Reassess your processes and playbooks to allow employees to use technology to do their jobs
- ii. Review operational efficiencies and workflows, for example, can employee training be delivered online instead of face-to-face?
- iii. Consider any hardware you may need to provide employees that will be working remotely more often such as laptops

Please note: this is a guide checklist and should be tailored to the specific needs of your organisation.

TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

How will technology continue to propel your organisation forward in the new era of work, and what is the balance between physical and virtual interactions?

As you build out your infrastructure for regular and potentially widespread remote working, you should be thinking about the knock-on effects on the hiring, onboarding, training and performance management of your employees.

Is your organisation prepared to manage and coordinate hybrid teams which could be operating to different schedules, such as working different hours while others work remotely? How will you ensure key projects are managed and key performance indicators set when workers are no longer in the same location?

Telecommuting can also mean isolation and loneliness for some members of the workforce, so how will you communicate with remote workers, create a shared culture, ensure effective collaboration and build better employee experiences across digital platforms?

You'll need to think about how you upskill your existing workforce and hire tech expertise to deliver and maintain any new technology investments. There is also the opportunity to explore built-in learning and micro-learning techniques.

Technological enhancements are now more rapid than ever, so you'll need a way to continually evaluate suitability of tools and technologies as things evolve, what works today may not be fit for purpose tomorrow.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN ASSESSING ONGOING DIGITISATION

1. What does your technology suite for the future look like?
2. What is the technology investment required to allow employees to continue to work remotely, for example, do all staff need company devices or will you allow them to use their own?
3. What investments are required to create a technology environment that will enable your company to thrive in the future? Are there specific productivity or work-scheduling tools needed?
4. How are you enabling and supporting organic adoption of technology?
5. If there has been a stigma about remote working within your organisation in the past, how will you remove this?
6. How can your leaders act as catalysts for the change in the way your organisation uses technology and inspire their workforce to be agile to these changes?
7. How will you maintain connectedness and build a company culture against a backdrop of social distancing and digital divide?
8. How will technology help you create a culture amongst dispersed employees?
9. How do you build trust between users in a digital network without social contact?
10. How will skills and roles need to evolve as you adopt new technology? How will increased automation impact the functions and skills required in your business?
11. What tools will you use in your recruitment and onboarding process?
12. Which stakeholders and business users need to be involved in the decisions around deploying and using technology?



“ Is your organisation prepared to manage and coordinate hybrid teams which could be operating to different schedules, such as working different hours while others work remotely? ”

IN SUMMARY

COVID-19 meant many organisations were forced to adapt their ways of working at a speed that many of us perhaps didn't think could be possible. There are still many unknowns in the weeks and months ahead, but what we can focus on is how to bring the knowledge we have gained in the last few weeks into the new era of work.

Within this guide, we have covered some of the key points leaders need to consider as they transition their teams back into the workplace – how will the operations of your organisation need to change? What technology will you need to invest in? Which skills will your team need and how can you raise their productivity? How can you ensure the wellbeing of your team is kept front and centre throughout the transition?

Across all these areas, leaders should reflect on what has worked well during this time of upheaval, and how they can make the best use of these opportunities going forward. For example, the crisis has shown that many organisations can sustain a large proportion, if not all, of their workforce to work from home. Working remotely has long been identified by professionals as something they value. Therefore, how can your organisation implement this into the 'new normal' way of working?

“As your lifelong partner, we remain committed to supporting your organisation, large or small, as we navigate the new era of work together.”

“Leaders now need to use the time to reflect on which aspects of their old 'normal' way of working are no longer fit for purpose and can be removed, and which aspects may need to be adapted to best futureproof their organisation.”

Linked to this is the effect the crisis has had on our use of technology. There's been a definite increase in expertise, but which tools worked best for your team, and which helped to facilitate better collaboration? Also, not forgetting how to sustain a 'software' or growth mindset in your team so they remain confident and capable of developing and open to new ideas. This might require a cultural shift.

Each organisation will have learned its own unique lessons from this unprecedented situation. Leaders now need to use the time to reflect on which aspects of their old 'normal' way of working are no longer fit for purpose and can be removed, and which aspects may need to be adapted to best futureproof their organisation.

As part of this reflection, leaders will no doubt identify skills gaps within their workforce. To overcome these skills deficits, this may require upskilling of your existing team, or a change in your hiring plans to ensure you can access the right skills as we emerge out the other side of this crisis and into the new era of work. As your lifelong partner, we remain committed to supporting your organisation, large or small, as we navigate the new era of work together.

THE MEDIUM- TO LONG-TERM EFFECT OF THIS CRISIS ON SKILLS

Rain Newton-Smith, Chief Economist, CBI

- The crisis will exacerbate some of the longer-term trends we saw in skills before it emerged. It will also exacerbate some of the demographics that were disproportionately affected by skills shortages.
- After this crisis, I think we are likely to see a focus on supply chain resilience, including data analysis and assessment skills you need within that.
- Digitally enabled remote working will be key going forward.
- We also expect to see a faster displacement of automation of in-person manual jobs, as well as a rise of e-commerce channels and virtual sales as opposed to in-person customer sales.
- We'll also likely see an increase in the need of leadership skills to navigate the challenges we will face.
- Before the crisis, we were seeing a disproportionate effect on occupations with lower wages. These were the occupations in general decline. We are now seeing an acceleration of this.
- This is an opportunity to grapple with the training and up-skilling challenge.

WE'RE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR SERVICES

With over 50 years of recruitment expertise, Hays is well placed to help you as the world of work evolves. We are committed to continuing to support you as your lifelong career partner through both the current challenges and your longer-term planning. We offer a range of services, each of which are designed to provide invaluable support to your organisation – both now and as we enter the new era. Follow the links below to find out more.

Permanent recruitment

We provide comprehensive support and offer expert consultancy to identify your unique requirements before creating your bespoke permanent recruitment campaign to attract any talented professionals you require going forward.

[Find out more ▶](#)

Temporary recruitment

Whether you will be managing peaks in demand or implementing transformative change, we have the expertise to supply temps with the skills you need.

[Find out more ▶](#)

Salary benchmarking

We deliver bespoke salary and reward reports to help you inform change and organisation restructuring, develop competitive attraction strategies and improve employee retention.

[Find out more ▶](#)

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In a time where your organisation's online presence is more important than ever, our Digital Solutions team ensures your available positions are seen by the right people through an omnichannel approach to recruitment.

[Find out more ▶](#)

Outsourced permanent recruitment

A tailored recruitment process outsourcing, or RPO, agreement with Hays means we take on the responsibility for your permanent recruitment, improving your candidate attraction processes and overall time-to-hire.

[Find out more ▶](#)

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Hays Talent Solutions provides a dedicated Managed Service Programme, or MSP, to improve the way you procure your non-permanent workforce, saving your organisation time and money and increasing the quality of your hires.

[Find out more ▶](#)

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Hays Career Transition offer high-quality, modular outplacement support for organisations going through restructuring or redundancies to ensure your employees are supported through changing times.

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Hays Assessment & Development delivers bespoke, high quality, cost effective candidate selection solutions to ensure the staff you hire have the skills you need.

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Hays Executive is a dedicated search and selection practice to find the right people to lead your organisation. We find high-calibre appointees who are embedded and achieving with your organisation from day one.

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Hays Thrive – our free online training portal

Hays Thrive is an online training platform available completely free to all organisations, big or small, to help get their workforce prepared and give them the tools they need to thrive in an ever-changing world of work.

[Find out more ▶](#)

Inspire Me in the New Era of Work

As the world of work evolves, our Inspire Me in the New Era of Work hub provides practical guides and insights to support you through both the current challenges and your longer-term planning.

[Find out more ▶](#)