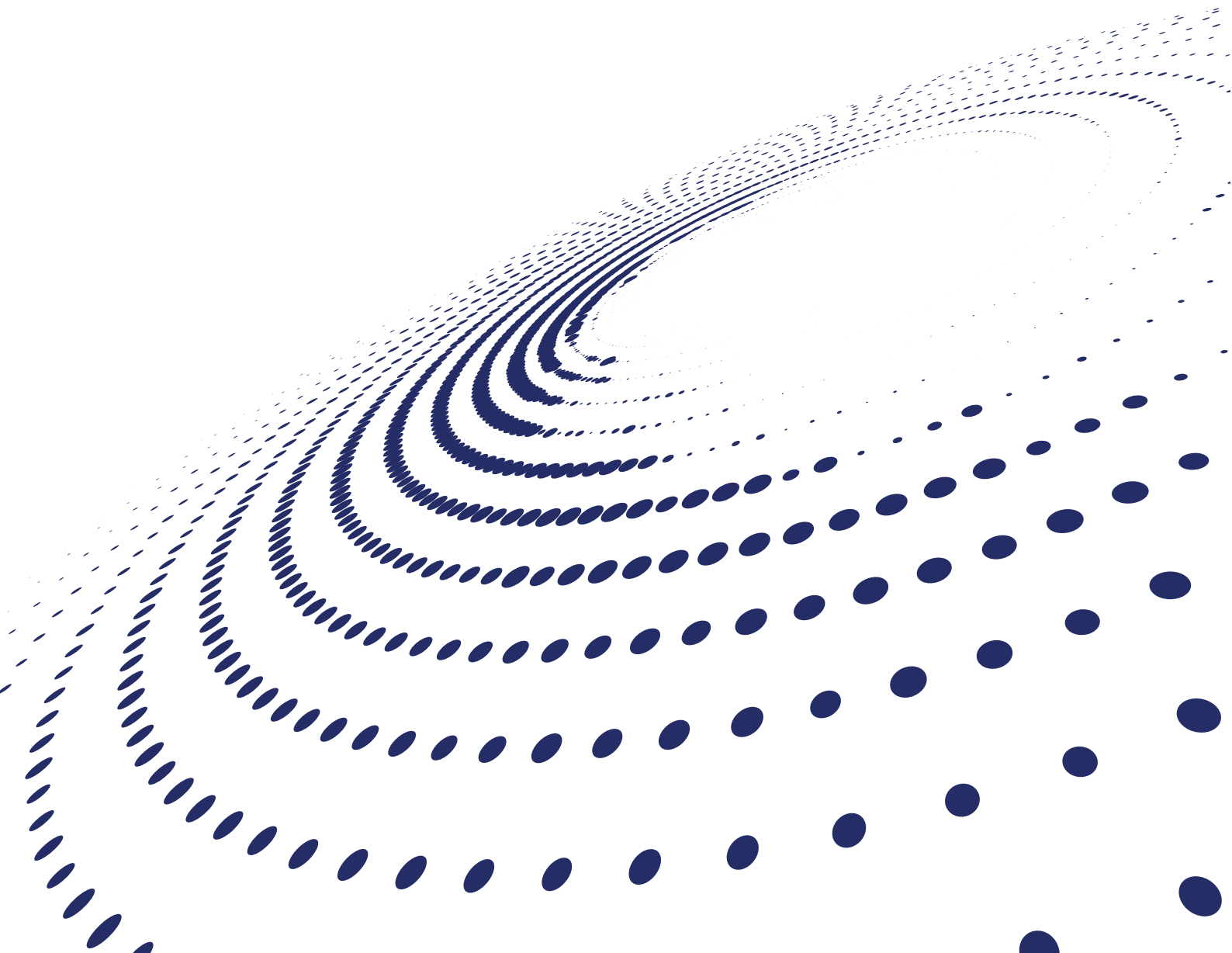


RETURN TO WORK DURING COVID-19

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What is this?

Following Covid-19, employers are asking themselves a major question: What does a return to work look like and how will businesses operate? This simple guide provides a checklist for businesses on the broad implications of resuming operations while still ensuring the safety of employees, clients and customers. It is adopted from guidelines issued by the International Organization of Employers.

The guide is structured to account for major thematic considerations along with key questions and resources to be considered when implementing a return-to-work plan. The core elements include the following:

- The decision to return to work
- Implementation and execution of return to work
- Coping with the after-effects
- Sustaining the right culture post-Covid-19
- Embracing the new realities of work

Checklist Guide to Managing Return to Work

CONSIDERATION THEME	KEY QUESTIONS	RELEVANT RESOURCES
<p>The Decision to Return to Work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data is available? • Do I have a small team of people leading a back to work initiative? • Should we incorporate a staggered approach? • Who qualifies as essential in my staffing plan? • Is my sector/business fit for teleworking? • Would an extended teleworking policy be feasible? • What should I do about non-essential business personnel? • Is my desired approach in compliance with regulatory bodies? • Is my desired approach in the best interests of my business? • How should I communicate the return to work? • What expectations should I set with our Board of Directors and other stakeholders, such as clients? • What are my civic responsibilities to the community at large? • What analyses have I run to ensure good decision making? • Would a return to work trigger any benefits from the government? 	<p>When making the decision to return to work, there are several factors to consider such as compliance with any government directives, Ministry of Health as well as observance of recommendations by the World Health Organization (WHO). For example, an employer may not open a restaurant due to regulations by the Ministry of Health.</p> <p>Employers who can re-open should identify a small team of people who can follow the developments on the business impact of this virus and propose various practical recommendations for management to consider.</p> <p>Employers who decide to re-open can incorporate a staggered approach. Depending on the area and industry, employers may bring in a limited number of people to the worksite at a time, especially after a pandemic and ensure social distancing as encouraged by government.</p> <p>An extended teleworking policy will be useful to implement a staggered strategy, where part of the workforce remains teleworking or groups or teams split to alternate presence at the workplace.</p>



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		<p>The GoK has gazetted a list of essential service providers i.e. those who are required to report to work regardless of conditions, such as health care and public safety workers.</p> <p>Communicating with employees during a crisis is important from beginning to the end to help employees remain engaged and come back positive and productive. This will also help them stay informed about policies and measures taken by the government on return to work. Regular communication and exchange of information with the Federation of Kenya Employers is key.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I design the sustainability plan for my organization's future state? • How do I provide the appropriate mix of wellbeing and mental health support to my workforce? • What are the critical components of an effective trauma-informed training program for my staff? • Am I ready for potential spikes in Covid-19 infections? • How do I forge partnerships with local healthcare providers to ensure effective return to work? • How do I deal with potential fears of workers? 	<p>The employees returning back to work and those being hired need assurance that their workplace is hazard free. It is important to reassure employees that measures have been taken to provide safety and security at the workplace. For instance sanitation protocols, installing more cleaning facilities, social distancing etc.</p>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What key factors should I monitor for continuous information about threats to the business? • Where can I find recovery resources for my managers and workforce? 	<p>As part of a business continuity plan, employers will want to include information on where employers and employees can go for the latest information on potential threats to the business, for example, visiting reliable web pages, listening to a specific radio station or reviewing the company's intranet. Many employers outline in their plans who will be notified of potential threats, when and how.</p> <p>The Federation of Kenya Employers commits to provide timely and regular information to help guide you to make informed decisions.</p>



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<p>Sustaining the Right Culture Post-Covid-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are my organisation's values and guiding principles the same? • Do we have the right person-culture fit among all staff? • Are we, the leaders of the organisation, applying the principle of transparent communication? • What are the new workplace rules and implementation strategy? • How do I support the families of our staff for effective return to work? • How does our organisation re-engage customers and stakeholders? • Have we provided proper tools to enhance the employment experience for those teleworking permanently? • Do I have the right assessment tools to capture the state of our culture? • Are there any training opportunities I can tap into to reskill my employees? 	<p>Besides operationalizing the business, consider how the workplace culture will change as a result of the pandemic. This will inform changes on the core values and guiding principles if any.</p> <p>If your values included "Commitment to Customers", for example, should you also now include "Commitment to Employees"? In a crisis, what did or will your company do in the future to help your employees reinforce Occupational, Safety and Health measures. For "Commitment to Customers", what does that look like now?</p> <p>Ensuring that delivery will be available and operating hours more flexible, ability to purchase items online, or hold store credits for longer periods of time during a crisis.</p> <p>Consider training opportunities to help employees manage the after-effects of Covid-19. Work-based learning can also be developed virtually or physically, to encourage a culture of continuous learning at the enterprise level.</p>



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<p>Embracing the New Realities of Work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the lessons learned from the crisis? • How can I ensure employees are not contributing to the issue (e.g. sick, spreading communicable diseases)? • Can I institute testing such as temperature taking, as a precautionary measure for communicable diseases? • How do I leverage existing workplace flexibility technologies for teleworking and virtual teamwork? • What can I do to assess the return on workforce investment of human capital programs? • What is the right ratio of onsite versus teleworking? How can I then restructure the rental arrangements? • How can I equip my managers with tools for dealing with generational differences? • How can I ensure knowledge transfer through situations like a pandemic? • What are the best tools for enhancing coordination and collaboration in a teleworking strategy? • How do I hire for a virtually diverse workforce? • How do I design and cultivate a collaborative and productive teleworking culture? 	<p>In a pandemic, everyone is concerned about re-occurrence and exposure to communicable diseases. Ensure that there are policies and procedures in place to guide handling of communicable diseases in the workplace so that everyone can feel at ease and able to respond accordingly. This will also include reflecting on the crisis and coming up with practical recommendations on the lessons learned.</p> <p>To keep the business operational, consider whether work can continue with employees teleworking. Working from home is both rewarding and challenging. Ensure that employees have proper equipment and software to work from home. Also consider their ability to communicate easily and without disruption. Ensure that telecommuting policies and procedures are in place and capturing ways of managing and monitoring performance.</p> <p>Furthermore, the business may consider forming strategic partners with new allies such as thought leaders, academia and think tanks. This not only shows stakeholders and clients that employers are resourceful, it also can be a way to enrich the repository of knowledge and information for business sustainability and resilience.</p>



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<p>Embracing the New Realities of Work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I form strategic partnerships with thought leaders, academia and think tanks to constantly update and build on internal repository of knowledge and information? • How can I better understand the changing behaviour of stakeholders and clients post-Covid-19? • How can I make it more convenient for my clients to access information and purchase goods/services? • Have I maximised the use of technology and social media? • Can I identify through research, which areas/sectors are less affected by Covid-19 so I can expand my goods/services where business prospects are better? 	<p>Anticipate the changing preferences and consumption behavior of various stakeholders more so customers. Customers have opted for convenience, technology and social media used by the business should work towards this end.</p> <p>Small and medium sized enterprises ability to adapt is important. Consider joining forces to attain more visibility of work done and business offerings. This could also mean changing the way services are being offered or changing the packaging of existing products.</p>

Conclusion

There is no “one size fits all” solution to the challenges companies are facing in the highly evolving situation experienced right now. These key questions are guiding points towards helping businesses rethink and plan for their journey towards a safe and effective return to work policy. Every single individual, company, country is learning how to cope and deal with the crisis. Those that learn and adopt fast have a better chance of surviving and emerging stronger post Covid 19.



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