

Finding a New Normal in Trying Times

How to Navigate Your Workforce During COVID-19

COVID-19 has created unprecedented challenges and forced new types of conversations for employers around the world. This situation has impacted analytic.li as an employer and has made us think deeply on how we can support our customers through these trying times.

There's a lot to cover, and more that can be covered, regarding COVID-19. Many resources are popping up. Wading through them can feel somewhat overwhelming. As always, our commitment is to make these complex situations simpler to navigate by offering thoughts on where to begin and where to focus.

Safety

More important than anything else is the safety of our employees and their families. That's why analytic.li, like many other employers, has initiated a work from home program. We understand how fortunate we are that the nature of our work lends itself to working remotely. We realize there are employers and job types that cannot. For organizations falling in this category, the best thing to do is have empathy and to try to understand where you have members of your employee population who are more at risk than others. [The Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has advised that older adults and people with serious chronic medical conditions like heart disease, diabetes and lung disease are at a higher risk. We advise our customers to:

- Segment your population by age to determine at risk employees.
- Review list of at-risk employees who report to a location that has more than 25 people and consider adjusting work locations and/or responsibilities for a period of time.
- Locate at risk employees who must remain within confined areas throughout the workplace and consider adjusting work responsibilities for a period of time.
- Identify job types and titles who have direct, in-person contact with customers, vendors, etc. and consider other safety and precautionary measures available.

It is important to be mindful of the additional mental stress an employee will have as he or she navigates COVID-19 for their household. There will likely be additional financial, health, and logistical factors (e.g. primary caregiving) that will need to be addressed. We recommend taking a moment to consider the make-up of your employee population:

- Do you have a lot of parents who will be needing to identify childcare options? Are there many employees who are in the 'sandwich generation', where caregiving options for elderly loved ones will also need to be considered?
- Are any of your team members expecting or have a loved one who is expecting? What about generational differences? Millennials have not "worked" during a crisis like this before. Are there ways to foster a dialogue with older teammates who have navigated a crisis in the workplace before?

Here are ways to look at your workforce data to see how you can better support your employees:

- Segment your population by those who are claiming employee + child or employee + family on benefits to identify those who may need support with childcare.
- Segment your population by generation to better understand the types of generational considerations needed.
- Dig into the number of individuals who have elected short term disability coverage and/or have planned parental leave.

This is the time to confirm your organization's commitment to the safety and well-being of your staff. Providing a sense of security and trust for your employees will help them thrive. ¹



Proactive Workforce Planning

Once you have considered the necessary safety concerns for your population, you can begin to consider the continuity of your business operations. Undoubtedly, COVID-19 will have an impact on day-to-day operations; however, there are ways you can plan for and mitigate a larger impact. It is a best practice to have all workers who do not require to be in-person work from home.

- Consider your work locations and how the heat map of COVID-19 impacted areas overlaps:
 - For business essential roles, consider diverting them to different locations. Increase the cleaning services, availability of disinfectant wipes/solutions and training on good hand washing at all areas.
 - Quickly identify and segment roles who are not critical to be in-person and begin to outfit these individuals with the resources they need to work remotely.
 - Understand how working from home will impact your workers' experience and access to necessary resources. Do any of your workers live in areas where grocery stores and health care services are difficult to gain access to?

Finding a New Normal

With COVID-19, there will be more employees working from home than ever before. Employers should be mindful of the various challenges this will create. Clear, consistent and concise communication is paramount to a productive remote workforce for the following reasons:

- Working remotely can increase the feeling of isolation. We recommend instituting daily team stand-up meetings or encouraging an environment of ad hoc "check in's" to combat isolation.
- Recommitting to collaboration tools can help increase the flow of information and the feeling of connectedness. At analytic.li, we use Microsoft Teams. We talked this week about 'posting often' to stay in touch with other team members, whether it is business related or something personal.
- There are leaders and managers who have never managed a remote workforce before and are now being asked to do so. It is important to communicate the goals and reiterate the objectives to the team so that you foster the feeling of accountability.

It is important to help employees find a new normal way of communicating and operating not only for the business but also their daily lives.

To summarize, we encourage businesses to:

1. **Put the safety of employees and their families first.** Do what you can to support them and keep them healthy so your teams can remain as productive as possible.
2. **Embrace a proactive approach to workforce planning.** Do what you can to be flexible and provide alternate working arrangements for your teams.
3. **Be clear, be calm and communicate with your teams.** Help them find new ways of working and living during this COVID-19 outbreak.

Now is the time to reconfirm a company's values and focus during these unprecedented times. We wish you all the best.

References:

¹ <https://www.mercer.com/our-thinking/career/voice-on-talent/continuing-business-when-businesscontinuity-is-interrupted.html>
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