CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC:
HR DIRECTORS AND EXPERTS DISCUSSION FORUM
POST COVID-19 PLANNING

At a Zoom Interactive Event on 8th June, CRF hosted HR Directors and experts in discussion on the topic of emerging from the coronavirus pandemic. In this session, CRF introduced a new Post Covid-19 Planning Tool, and participants discussed issues related to returning to the office, extending home environments, and diversity and inclusion. This summary shares some of the key insights from the discussion.

CRF Post Covid-19 Planning Tool

Thinking About Returning to the Office / Extending Home Environments

Thinking About Diversity and Inclusion

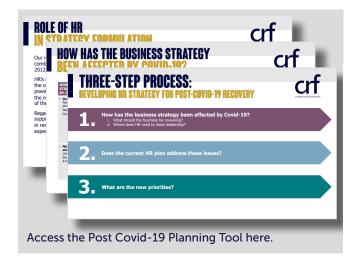**CRF Post Covid-19 Planning Tool**

The Covid-19 crisis has caused many businesses to rethink their strategies and tactics. As HR plans and strategies flow from the business strategy, it is critical to re-evaluate HR plans based on the changed or changing reality.

CRF's planning tool, adaptable to unique business environments, helps organisations capture learning, rethink priorities, and create a re-prioritised plan to support recovery and future growth.

The tool outlines a three-step process for developing HR strategy for the post Covid-19 recovery.

1. How has the business strategy been affected by Covid-19? (What should the business be reviewing? Where does HR need to show leadership?)

2. Does the current HR plan address these issues?

3. What are the new priorities?

Some of the issues the tool can address include growth, new product development and deployment, digital technology, leadership, risk, and work, the a new contract between governments and workers?

Access the Post Covid-19 Planning Tool here.

Thinking About Returning to the Office / Extending Home Environments

- One big challenge for multinationals is that one size does not fit all. Different countries have different circumstances and different rules. For example, regarding the return to the office – what's the legal position on taking temperatures and similar health and safety practices? Can organisations devise a global policy, or do policies have to be strictly local? Things are moving so fast – there are many questions at a practical level.

- Some organisations are asking what the future culture of the organisation will be like? Where and how will working practices be modernised? What lessons can be taken from the past few months? What kind of innovations can be made to give the business a boost for the future? It's important not to lose the opportunity to radically rechange how productivity is driven.

- Many businesses are thinking about restructuring to position themselves for the future.

- Some organisations have polled staff about returning to the worksite and are finding a strong preference for more flexible working and not coming back. The strength of the preference is much higher than anticipated for many organisations.

- Age and geography are two factors that are influencing attitudes toward returning to work. Some companies are finding that older people in more senior roles are eager to get back to the office because they are used to it. With respect to geography, in cities, getting to work by public transport is a huge concern (more flexibility around start/finish times is one potential solution). Outside cities, the concern is more around the health and safety situation in the office, as opposed to the commute.

- Many employers are exploring the workplace as a collaboration environment. There is a generational difference with younger people wanting to be back in the workplace for social and practical reasons.

- Returning to the office is proving much harder to plan for than adjusting to remote working. It is complicated by the fact that, to many, there seems to be limited practical benefit to returning to the office in socially distanced conditions, and/or if only small number of employees returning.

- Some companies are finding that a fair number of their people who could telework want to go back to the office for its infrastructure (reliable network, screens, office chairs, and so on).

- Some companies are thinking about the longer-term talent retention of busy teams. How do we create 'social glue', remotely, for very busy people? One organisation has found a powerful solution in having senior managers call people to check-in, which has been helpful both for getting a sight on what's going on and for engaging and building the morale of people.

- Some companies are reluctant to get too comfortable with remote working, as they've invested a lot in physical offices.

- With regard to equipping employees for home working, upgrading technology is important, but equally important is paying attention to issues such as wellbeing, particularly mental wellbeing.

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Thinking About Diversity and Inclusion

- Senior executives at many organisations are speaking out about the Black Lives Matter movement. It is interesting to see them stepping in, and so strongly, given that getting involved in controversial social issues is something that senior executives typically do not do.

- At some organisations, Covid-19 has taken a backseat to the issues around Black Lives Matter. Businesses are finding that their employees have intense emotion and anger around the issues. Some organisations are having listening sessions to respond to this.

- With respect to the movement, it was noted that it is especially important that white male leaders listen rather than try to come up with solutions themselves. Additionally, people are wanting more proactive responses from employers, not just rhetoric.

- Some organisations are thinking about how, as we phase people back into the workplace whilst children are still not in school, practices and policies will be put in place to support women/carers. There is a risk that we drive a bigger gender imbalance if we see most men returning to the office while most women remain at home to provide childcare. The Women's Business Council and Business in the Community have good advice on this topic. In general, still more flexibility is likely to be a key response to meeting all kinds of varying employee needs.

PARTICIPANT POLL

How is your business responding to future needs?

Restructuring now
25%

Restructuring in the near future
40%

No plans to restructure
35%

Further Reading

- Business in the Community. 2020. **Covid-19: Supporting Carers in the Workplace.** https://www.bitc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/bitc-age-toolkit-CarersandCoronavirus-Mar20.pdf

- CRF. 2020. **Post Covid-19 Planning Tool.** https://www.crforum.co.uk/research-and-resources/post-covid-19-planning-tool

- CRF. 2019. **Creating an Inclusive Culture.** Speed Read. https://www.crforum.co.uk/research-and-resources/speed-read-creating-an-inclusive-culture

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- Frost, Stephen. 2020. **Black Lives Matter: If You're White, Pass the Mic.** Forbes https://www.forbes.com/sites/sfrost/2020/06/03/black-lives-matter-if-youre-white-pass-the-mic/#6d9fa4796945

- PACAF. 2020. **Statement on Black Lives Matter.** Twitter https://twitter.com/pacaf/status/1268794618461618177?s=12

- The High Low. 2020. **Anti-Racism Resources and an Author Special with Candice Brathwaite.** https://play.acast.com/s/thehighlowshow/7820668b-af83-4efc-84c8-37ddc75af970