

EMPLOYER HANDBOOK

SERIES



MANAGING YOUR
WORKFORCE THROUGH
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
& INTO THE FUTURE

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About Us

We are West Africa's No. 1 Career Platform.

Founded in 2009, Jobberman started as a recruitment and job search platform but has grown into an all-encompassing career platform offering online career advice, personalised HR solutions for both individuals and institutions as well as training services for jobseekers.

We have been nominated for several awards, such as 'Best use of Technology' for Y Naija (Future Awards) and have received a notable mention by Forbes Magazine. We were voted in at No. 8 in Forbes Magazine's Top 20 Tech Start-Ups in Africa and also featured in the McKinsey Internet Report on aspiring countries as one of the most 'Innovative Companies in Nigeria'.

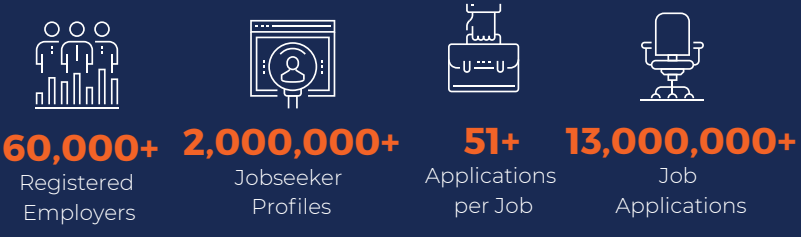


Our vision is simple: to be Nigeria's most user-centric and transparent career platform; where we connect the right candidates with the right opportunities. We consider ourselves PACE setters and thus our core values: **Performance, Accountability, Continuous Learning, Excellence.**

We don't only offer job information services, we are here to build careers. Jobberman Nigeria forms part of the investment portfolio of Ringier One Africa Media, one of Africa's largest digital publishers, allowing global brands to reach targeted audiences nationally, regionally, continentally and by each vertical in which they operate.

Our Numbers

Jobberman is the #1 Jobs portal in Nigeria with a long track record of happy handshakes.



Our Services





Introduction

The world of work has been one of the major entities most affected by COVID-19, nature of the workplace and the way businesses manage their workforce has had to change and adapt to the new realities. And as several countries of the world are locking down their economies, organisations have had to adjust to comply with lockdown restrictions while striving to keep operations going. Working-from-home (WFH) has become an immediate solution to business continuity.

The pandemic has impacted factors such as, Hiring Decisions, Hiring Processes, Remote Working Policies & Tools, Effective Employee Communication, Employee Performance Management & Well-being and Post-Crisis HR Plan, all of which this handbook seeks to explore. These changes are quite exciting because they offer the potential for dynamic transformations.

Given that this was unprecedented, as well as the uncertainty it poses to many organisations; we decided to curate expert advice and research insights. These are HR best practices that can help businesses navigate not only these uncertain times but as well as its aftermath.

This handbook aims to assist HR practitioners with HR best practices during disruption and in the future. It can be used as a guideline to put theory into practice and develop customised approaches in the workplace. Take the learnings and adapt to your situation.

COVID-19 is forcing both the pace and scale of workplace innovation. Things have changed, you have to take charge and drive what is right for your business.

Methodology

The Jobberman Nigeria Employer Handbook was compiled based on information from external research, Jobberman Nigeria's in-house HR experts and external HR experts from different companies in Nigeria.



CHAPTER

1

Hiring Decisions

Hiring decisions entail evaluating whether there is a need for the organisation to hire. The evaluation allows employers to make informed decisions before deciding to hire and maximise their resources the best way.

In this chapter we cover how to evaluate if you should hire and how to communicate decisions with stakeholders.

1.1 How To Evaluate If You Should Hire

Making hiring decisions in uncertain times such as the Coronavirus pandemic may cause stress and strain on your hiring process. However, before embarking on hiring, you have to thoroughly evaluate whether it is necessary to hire. Look at the disruption as an opportunity to better your processes, adapt and then execute accordingly.

You can start by using an evaluation framework that addresses these questions:





HR Expert Says:

"As a business you always want to ensure that your hiring is fulfilling your business needs. An evaluation framework helps to ensure that the role you are trying to fill is needed and also contributes to your overall organisational goals".



Foluso Agbaje

Head, Human Resources at Jobberman Nigeria

Research Says:



According to a global job evaluation report by **Merce**, doing a job evaluation before hiring enables clarity, consistency and control. As per Merce's findings: Clarity: **65%** of HR Professionals found transparency to be the main benefit of job evaluation.

Consistency: **81%** cited "uniformity and consistency in grading systems" as the strongest factor supporting the overall business strategy. Control: **67%** of HR reported that their investment in job evaluation paid off in reducing the risk of misallocating resources and ensuring an optimal return on their investment in people.

Reference: "Maximising The Value Of Job Evaluation," Mercer, 2015.

1.2 How To Communicate Decision With Stakeholders

It is critical to communicate with relevant stakeholders from the evaluation phase to the implementation of the hiring process. However, how you communicate with each one may differ depending on the most suitable medium of communication, nonetheless, you must communicate effectively and efficiently.

Open communication and transparency are fundamental when communicating hiring decisions with stakeholders, and help you make more informed decisions, manage stakeholder expectations and improve your chances of finding the right candidate. For example, if changes occur during the evaluation process or, if you decide to pause hiring and wait for a better suitable time or when you have sufficient resources, inform the relevant stakeholders involved.

How to communicate with stakeholders during the hiring process



Schedule virtual meeting

Video calls are one of the most efficient and effective communication channels to convey information.



Share hiring project plans

Ensure stakeholders know what the project entails, deadlines, processes to follow.



Outline stakeholder responsibilities

Ensure that you outline what is required of each stakeholder in the process.



Follow up with stakeholders

Use video calls as they are the most effective way to communicate with remote stakeholders.

You can also use email or instant messaging as a last resort, in case video meetings are not a viable option at the time.



HR Expert Says: — **KPMG**

"Communicating with stakeholders when hiring remotely during and post-COVID-19 is important for the purpose of engagement, it helps to also show an objective business case for that hiring. Engagement shows openness and trust."

Gloria Ibeziako

Head of People, Performance and Culture, KPMG Nigeria

Research Says:



According to the **African Journal of Business Management**, stakeholder communication drives all other functions and knowledge areas from initiation of a project until its closeout. Stakeholder communication is the key to the success or failure of a project.

Reference: "The Impact of Stakeholder Communication on Project Outcome," African Journal of Business Management Vol. 5(14).



CHAPTER

2

Hiring Processes

The hiring process begins by identifying a hiring need in the organisation. The need varies in different organisations. The hiring process depends on the company and methods it prefers to attract and find suitable applicants.

In this chapter we look at where and how to advertise your roles, using assessments, how to conduct remote interviews, using digital tools and how to onboard remote employees.

2.1 Where And How To Advertise Your Roles

Once you have decided to hire, an effective advertisement should follow to ensure that your resources such as time, effort and money are maximised.

An effective job advertisement should contain all the important information, reflect your employer brand and be short and punchy. In addition, it should include the 'what is in it for me' ('WIFM') principle.

For example, indicate whether it's remote work, let the job ad reflect your company culture and overall employer brand. Even though you're recruiting during a pandemic, your employer brand needs to remain consistent and should be upheld in your recruitment marketing.

Effective job advertisement can be done through the following channels:



Job Portals

There are various job portals, some are free while others are premium. Job portals are one of the most used platforms because they have the highest reach, are cost-effective, easy to use, make hiring faster, enable employer branding and also offer numerous recruitment products, which help employers to find the right candidate.

They also allow recruiters to customise their recruitment process through ATS-enabled technology while saving time and costs.

Company Website

Using your company website is another platform to advertise vacant roles on your careers page, however, if your company is not big enough, it may affect your reach hence using job portals may be a better option.



Social Media Networks

Social media recruitment is cost-effective, has a wider reach, and allows employers to add personal elements to their advertisements as they interact with candidates socially while accessing passive candidates.

There are different types of social media networks to advertise job vacancies; some are casual and others are professional. For example, you can use LinkedIn for professional reach and Facebook or Twitter as casual mediums.

Referrals / Word of Mouth

This form of job advertising is characterised by a high level of trust and is cost-effective. It can be done in the form of internal communication channels within the company, where you make vacancy announcements to your employees so that they can share the information with relevant interested parties such as acquaintances and friends.



News Publications

Print and online publications are one of the traditional forms of job advertising, however; they are more expensive with a limited audience and limited shelf life compared to other platforms such as job portals. In addition, they limit employer branding, hence it is vital to assess and evaluate which news publication suits you best and the cost.



HR Expert Says:

"The most important thing employers should consider when hiring during and post COVID-19 is that, I think the biggest risk we face, is for people who are currently employed and we may have headhunted them for a role - their concerns would be "is the new company likely to downsize or maintain growth" - and many may opt for what they know (current employer) versus a new employer. Post COVID-19 - we will probably see a lot more candidates who are available within the market due to some companies that have retrenched - the advice I would give is to continue your screening of candidates as normal - and ensure that you hire the right fit for your organisation."

Heather O'Shea
Group Head of Talent at ROAM



Research Says:



According to the **University of Stellenbosch Business School**, research shows that the so-called 'spray and pray' recruitment methods are no longer sufficient. The main reasons are that these methods only focus on the small and limited active pool of potential candidates; they do not give organisations access to sought-after talent in the semi-passive and passive candidate pools.

Reference: "The Impact Of Social Media On Recruitment: Are You LinkedIn?," University of Stellenbosch Business School, 2018.

2.2 Using Assessments

Assessments remain a vital part of the hiring process as they increase the probability of employers finding the right candidates and how likely they are to meet job requirements.

Assessments are designed to test factors such as critical thinking skills, technical knowledge, communication and interpersonal skills etc. Some assessments measure knowledge, skills and abilities while others measure personal attributes like personality traits, preferences etc. Both assessments are important but knowledge, skills and abilities are highly pivotal for employee retention.

How to use assessments

Online assessment platforms

Online assessment platforms are used to evaluate a candidate's abilities and characteristics, and are conducted through the use of technology. They enable employers to choose a job function, select the desired experience level for the job listing and then assess the candidate to test for the core competencies and knowledge required for specific roles. For example, Jobberman Nigeria, whose tailored assessments allows employers to:

- Filter from a large number of applicants.
- Save time by interviewing only the right candidates.
- Objectively compare candidates.
- Hire only the best candidates.
- Analyse results of the assessments by using individual assessment reports and scoring methodology.

Video assessments

Video assessments are a video-based assessment tool used by employers to record evaluation questions in a series of questions. Video assessments provide numerous benefits such as:

- Flexibility and time efficiency.
- Using customisable video interviewing enables seamless candidate experience and allows employers to ask candidates to answer specific questions regarding their role and its functionality.
- They allow employers to plan more effectively while using targeted questions and asking for more detailed answers from the candidate.
- Video assessments can also be recorded which allows you to thoroughly evaluate candidates.

Case studies

Case studies as an assessment method are designed to enable candidates to apply their knowledge and skills to real life situations.

- Using case studies as an assessment method allows employers to examine a candidate's capabilities in critical thinking, analytical reasoning, logic, problem-solving and communication skills.
- Case studies require candidates to understand, evaluate and analyse written information and apply it to job scenarios.



HR Expert Says:

"To find the right employees for your virtual team, it is important to assess their ability to work virtually and collaborate with the team from afar. It is also important to know what qualities work well in the virtual setting i.e what ensures your remote team is highly productive, efficient and effective. Therefore, assessments are necessary to measure abilities against candidates, the wider team and to see if they're the best fit for the organisation. Some of the key competencies worth assessing when hiring remotely include; communication and interpersonal skills, flexibility and adaptability, critical thinking, time management and technical knowledge."

BRITISH AIRWAYS



Tomi Ibirogba

HR Advisor at British Airways Plc

Research Says:



The **Harvard Business Review** says research shows that about 76% of organisations with more than 100 employees rely on assessment tools such as aptitude and personality tests for external hiring.

Reference: "Ace The Assessment," Harvard Business Review, 2015.

2.3 Remote Interviews (Dos and Don'ts etc)

For those companies that have not done them before, virtual interviews are a new way in the coronavirus pandemic and beyond. Not every company can afford to completely cancel their hiring plans because certain roles may be essential to sustaining and growing the business amidst the disruptive times. In addition, for some industries, (e.g., healthcare) hiring is absolutely essential right now.

HOW TO CONDUCT REMOTE INTERVIEWS

Prepare your technology

- Make sure your technology is in a good state to use to avoid technical difficulties. You can start with a tech trial a day before the interview to check if everything is good to go.
- Check if the room you intend to use has a strong internet connection.
- Check if all the necessary equipment is plugged in.
- Check if the candidate has all the required information for the interview, such as the link to the video conferencing tool, time, date, phone number etc.

Minimise distractions

- It is easy to get distracted while working from home. Put up a notice indicating that you're busy.
- Turn off chats and phone notifications.
- Avoid moving around during the interview as it causes distractions.

Come prepared and be presentable

- Have the candidate's information ready to avoid confusion and mumbling. For example, print out the candidate's resume and your list of questions. In addition, log into the interview conference tool earlier, before the interview starts to ensure that everything is working perfectly.
- Even though you're at home, dress as though you're at work. It is important to look presentable because first impressions count.

Have a backup plan

- What if your initial platform stops working or bandwidth issues arise? You need to ensure that you have the candidate's other contact details ready, such as their email address and phone number just in case the first plan doesn't go as intended.
- For bandwidth issues, you can turn off the video to avoid disruptions like screens freezing. You could also use another platform should the initial one fail, e.g., from Skype to Zoom or Google Meet, or vice versa.

Streamline Interview Team

- Having more interviewers allows for varied perspectives so make sure you choose wisely, however, when interviewing remote candidates, streamlining an interview team to a smaller group makes communication easier and reduces interruptions.

Be An Effective Listener

- Be attentive at all times.
- Look into the camera, keep eye contact, avoid noise and distraction in the background, wait a few seconds for the candidate to think before they answer.
- Watch your facial expressions and tone of voice.



HR Expert Says:

"With remote interviews, the opportunity to easily create an in person connection is removed. As a result, it is critical for the interviewers to make sure that they get the interviews right to ensure that they don't lose out on the right candidate for the job due to the method of interview deployed. We have to recognise that the culture of the environment we work and hire in, leaves us as Recruiters and hiring managers, with the responsibility of helping candidates we have shortlisted get comfortable with the remote interview process."

M.E.C

Isioma Coker

Team Lead, HR Advice at Multinational
Energy Company

Research Says:



Forbes says, when conducting remote job interviews during COVID-19, hiring for attitude, behavior, and cultural fit is just as important as measuring whether the candidate can perform to your expectations.

Reference: "How To Conduct Remote Job Interviews During COVID-19 Crisis," Forbes, 2020.

2.4 Using Digital Tools

A digital workplace requires digital tools to function efficiently and effectively, hence using digital tools to assess, recruit and hire suitable candidates is essential. Leveraging the right digital tools enables employers to attract the best candidates, keep them engaged and retain them, and in turn they will execute and uphold the company's vision.

DIGITAL TOOLS ORGANISATIONS SHOULD USE

Online talent acquisition platforms

Use online job boards to advertise your vacant jobs and find the right candidates with skills and experience.

Their AI-enabled technology helps match candidates to job opportunities.

Streamline communication tools

For instance, using the recruitment chatbox, whose function is to streamline the process by providing real-time, on-demand communication to candidates by answering FAQs about the job, providing feedback and updates, and scheduling a follow-up or interview with a human recruiter.

Secondly, you can use virtual interviewing technology video tools, such as Google Meet, Zoom and Skype.

Digital interviewing platforms

For example, Harqen which enables on-demand video, voice, and text interviewing, plus powerful analytics and reporting for faster, better candidate screening.

Recruitment marketing software

This allows you to attract and engage candidates through the use of marketing best practices, such as analytics, targeted messaging, and tech-enabled automation.

It also drives brand awareness of your company by attracting candidates who identify with your brand.

Skills assessment tools

This can be in the form of virtual assessment platforms (e.g., Jobberman assessment tools), virtual video assessment and virtual case studies.

Onboarding tools

Onboarding technology (such as: ClickUp, Lessonly, Typelane, Typeform, SoapBox App and Zenefits) can help streamline the administrative parts of the hiring process and save time for new hires to spend on more important tasks like training.



HR Expert Says:

"Digital tools play a huge role in recruiting especially during this pandemic where social distancing is of the essence. Prospective employees can share their screen, send documents, put a face to the name. The role is crucial and I would expect all businesses to adapt to our ever-changing environments."

Ogbleba Moses

Head, Human Resources , Axon Analytics



Research Says:



According to **Robert Walters**, tech is the great enabler in supporting a smooth remote hiring process in the absence of the face to face interview. To get the best results tech platforms should be used in conjunction with communication and conversation, not in isolation.

Reference: "Tech Tools To Help Run A Smooth Remote Hiring Process," Robert Walters.

2.5 Onboarding

Employers should ensure that their onboarding process proves that their organisation stands by its values and goals. This can be reflected in how onboarding is handled. It's also important to note that onboarding will take longer, ensure monthly check-ins. Let your onboarding execution reflect that the virtual door is still open; out of sight, but still very top of mind.

HOW TO ONBOARD REMOTE EMPLOYEES

- ✓ Share the right tools and equipment
- ✓ Share company information
- ✓ Give new employees time to review videos and documents
- ✓ Schedule an individual orientation
- ✓ Arrange a human resources orientation
- ✓ Create a communication orientation
- ✓ Have a team orientation
- ✓ Get the product or sales manager to explain what they do
- ✓ Encourage Feedback At All Times
- ✓ Maintain regular check-ins
- ✓ Introduce new employees to the team
- ✓ Check training requirements



HR Expert Says:

"The most effective way to onboard remote employees is via an onboarding portal. At the company, once you're made an offer you get access to an online portal that hosts all the onboarding materials. It's like a "one-stop-shop" that holds the contract, offer letter, employee handbook, company overview, videos from senior management, initial training etc. It also includes a checklist that keeps track of what needs to be done and a feedback survey where you can rate your induction process. Having this ahead of the start date helps to ensure all pre-induction activities are attended to. I would also suggest the system goes even further to assign the new hire with a pre-hire mentor or buddy to further create a sense of belonging."

Tomi Ibirogbu

HR Advisor at British Airways Plc

BRITISH AIRWAYS



Research Says:



According to a **LinkedIn** study, **72%** of new hires say one-on-one time with their direct manager is most important during onboarding.

Reference: "5 Things New Hires Want During Onboarding," LinkedIn, 2017.



CHAPTER

3

Remote Working Policies & Tools

Remote working policies are made up of an agreement that outlines when and how employees can work from locations other than the office. The policies describe who can work remotely, best practices to adhere to, as well as the legal rights of remote employees. The policies can be temporary or permanent, and vary in different organisations. In some organisations, remote working policies are embedded in the company culture while other organisations may have adopted them due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Remote working tools are the resources that help employees to perform their work uninterrupted to achieve organisational outcomes. They also help set up employees for success as they foster a conducive working environment, which boosts productivity and engagement.

In this chapter we explore the types of remote policies to consider, how to review and update policies and remote working important tools.

3.1 What Remote Policies Are Available & Applicable To Different Situations?

Working remotely has been around for some time but the COVID-19 pandemic has led to its rise as many organisations are embracing it. Employers should understand that the most important thing right now is the safety and well-being of their employees, therefore, they have to be swift to adapt to remote working structures.

TYPES OF REMOTE POLICIES TO CONSIDER



Health policies

Stipulate your company policy on employee health.

Communicate steps employees should take if they test positive for COVID-19.



Equipment policies

Remote workers need the right tools and resources to accomplish their work. Hence employers need to state what equipment they are willing to provide their employees, and if the equipment is insured.

For example, if employers expect employees to use their own tools such as laptops, or to provide their own internet, then they need to clearly specify that



Tech support policies

Being out of the office can be tricky without easy access to the tech team therefore, tech support is key.

Stipulate whether tech support will be provided for remote workers and who they should liaise with.



Communication policies

Stipulate what channels to be used for external and internal communications. What and who needs to approve company communications before anything is sent out to clients or employees, and how responsive communication should be. For example; in-house platforms to communicate information regarding announcements, news, business updates, communication channels and structures among teams etc.

State guidelines on mediums of communications such as video conferencing, Slack etc. For example, are cameras supposed to be on during meetings with employees and clients? Background of physical environment and dress code. What information should be shared on Slack?



Productivity measures

Productivity measures should be outlined in your remote work policies.

Explain how you intend to measure outcomes. For example, productivity can be measured based on sales, accomplished projects, client interactions etc.



Client confidentiality policies

Client confidentiality must be addressed in your policies to ensure that employees remain cautious with such pertinent information because it is better kept at the office, they hence should be vigilant when working in remote settings.



Security policies

One of the biggest concerns about remote work is security. When information is taken out of the office, it may be risky depending on where employees are working from, thus a security policy is paramount.

Employees should be urged to be very careful at all times.

HR Expert Says:



"People are not used to working from home, and policies will always provide clear guidelines on how to have skype calls on a daily basis, to take the breaks you need to (as you would within a normal office working environment). Also the rules of social distancing, office environments to protect the health of our staff."



Heather O'Shea

Group Head of Talent at ROAM

Research Says:



According to **Gallup**, leaders who want to attract and retain talent of any age should know how important flexible policies are to the workforce.

Reference: "Is Working Remotely Effective? Gallup Research Says Yes," Gallup, 2020.

3.2 Review & Update Policies

Operating during a pandemic and its aftermath requires employers to review and update policies as regularly as possible because things may change. Adjusting policies to suit the current times should be done and ensure that employers are notified of the adjusted policies.

HOW TO REVIEW AND UPDATE POLICIES

Seek knowledge

Be updated on the laws and regulations regarding the pandemic. The more you know the more informed decisions you will make and share with your employees.

Stay up to date with credible sources such as the World Health Organization, your country's labour laws and leading workplace platforms for industry trends and insights.

Consult relevant stakeholders

Review existing remote working policies or develop new strategies that can enable employees to work productively during and after the COVID-19 disruption.

Speak to different department heads to review, assess and then update policies to ensure that they're comprehensive.

Communicate updates

Share updated policies with employees. Encourage employees to familiarise themselves with the updated policies.

Encourage feedback and engagement from employees to ensure that they understand the revised policies. Re-emphasise policies in your communications.



HR Expert Says:

"The most effective way to formulate remote policies is to think about your employees' needs, working hours and avenues to guarantee productivity. Employees need to review policies very frequently, at least weekly. For example at Jobberman Nigeria, when we started working remotely all teams needed to have daily meetings. Now that we have been working remotely for over 2 months we are used to the style of things and most teams only formally meet twice a week now."



Foluso Agbaje

Head, Human Resources at Jobberman Nigeria

Research Says:



According to **Forbes**, businesses need effective and current policies and procedures now more than ever with the ever-changing regulatory framework and the proliferation of threats that did not exist even a few years ago. Insufficient and non-existent policies pose a legal threat to all businesses regardless of size.

Reference: "How To Use Technology To Support Remote Teams," Society for Human Resource Management, 2017.

3.3 Remote Working Important Tools

Make sure that your employees have the right tools needed to foster a conducive remote working environment that boosts productivity. Once you go the remote working route, that means employees will need important tools like laptops, software, mobile devices and high-speed internet connection, etc.

It is not reasonable to assume that everyone has all the mentioned important tools, and it is your responsibility as the employer to make sure they do. Remote working tools enable remote employees to connect, collaborate and perform their tasks.

REMOTE WORKING IMPORTANT TOOLS THAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD PROVIDE TO THEIR EMPLOYEES

Equipment



Hardware

Hardware. Tools such as laptops and desktops, allow employees to access and complete their work easily. Check whether these tools are in good working condition before giving them out to employees or else they will hinder their productivity.



Software

Software. Provide employees with a high-speed internet connection to avoid disruptions. Employees need to stay connected to the internet hence data bundles or Wi-Fi are critical for successful remote work.



Mobile devices

Provide mobile phones to relevant employees such as QAs and the sales team, who may need them to carry out their tasks.



Furniture

Home office equipment such as chairs, stands, tables for employees who may need them.



Stationery

Provide stationery to relevant employees in HR or admin. For example, printers, scanners etc.



Generators and diesel allowance

In an African context, remote work is not the norm in most companies due to infrastructural factors such as power shortages, hence generators and diesel allowance for generators should be provided to employees.

Communication Tools



One of the most used tools in organisations. It enables instant communication and feedback among employees and the organisation at large.

It allows employees to connect with each other and exchange information easily. Employers and employees can also create customized channels to communicate different messages on various topics.



Enables organisations to conduct virtual meetings with their employees.

It can also be used for town hall meetings or one-on-one meetings with team members.



A commonly used video conferencing tool for large meetings.

Zoom is a video communication tool with an easy, reliable cloud platform for video and audio conferencing, chat, and webinars.



In case technology glitches arise, airtime can be used for employees to contact customers or their colleagues to avoid affecting their productivity.

For example, the sales team may need to call clients directly if all technology tools fail.

CRM Tools

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools help manage the company's interaction with current and potential customers, which brings companies and customers together. CRM tools can be used to improve business relationships with customers, customer retention and sales growth.



This tool integrates with a wide range of popular web meeting and conferencing applications.

It allows salespeople to have real-time visual conversations with your prospects.



This tool enables businesses to use cloud technology to better connect with customers, partners and potential customers.

It provides powerful, connected products for improving your -marketing, sales, commerce, service, IT, and more.

Project Management Tools

Project management tools foster collaboration among teams, and allow employers and employees to see who is working on what. In these remote times, teams must be able to collaborate in real-time, and these tools enable that.



This tool allows teams to work more collaboratively and get more done. Trello's boards, lists, and cards enable you to organise and prioritise your projects. You collaborate on projects (e.g., design, campaigns) from beginning to end.

In addition, it allows you to add comments, attachments, due dates, and more directly to Trello cards. Therefore, it helps remote teams increase their productivity.



This tool enables collaboration on team projects, such as new website designs, social media presence, PR for new projects, client presentations etc.

Cloud / File Management Tools

File management tools make it easier to access and share documents among employees.



This is one of the most commonly used file management tools.

It allows employees to access work documents regardless of geographic location.



HR Expert Says:

"Tools are important as they help with productivity, management of, and collaboration with remote employees. These tools enable the employees to get real time feedback on work they are undertaking, gives their team and manager oversight over their workload and helps the employees feel connected to the bigger organisation."

M.E.C

Isioma Coker

Team Lead, HR Advice at Multinational
Energy Company

Research Says:



According to the **Society of Human Resource Management**, as you think through the options of using technology to support remote teams, you will find that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Determining the best strategy for your remote workforce depends on your company's business model, its culture, and employees' needs and attributes.

Reference: "How To Use Technology To Support Remote Teams," Society for Human Resource Management, 2017.



CHAPTER

4

Effective Employee Communication

For many organisations, developing a new communication strategy that works in the current times has become a norm while calming fears, managing employee well-being, managing expectations and keeping the business going. Despite the current status quo, employers should always remember; the goal in communicating is to communicate effectively and efficiently.

As companies embrace virtual mediums of communication and digital workplaces, it is imperative to ensure that effective communication is not neglected as it is critical to ensure that employees understand company priorities and what factors to prioritise and enhance employee productivity.

It is important to note that the best communication practice in remote structures is video messaging. Use video tools to convey messages efficiently and effectively to employees.

In this chapter we cover announcements, transparency, remote meeting structures and how to give feedback to remote employees.

4.1 Announcements

Making announcements to remote employees is bound to happen during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is what employers need to take into consideration when making announcements:

Stay informed and communicate with employees

Before you make announcements, make sure you have the right information regarding the current situation from credible sources such as WHO and official government communications.

Remind employees about policies regarding sick leave, annual leave, and working from home and communicate any new policies or measures taken to deal with COVID-19 to employees.

Provide credible sources where employees can access accurate and reliable information to avoid miscommunication and fake news.

Use the right medium to communicate

For example, you can use face-to-face video conferencing meetings but if that's not possible at the time, use email and Slack channels, depending on your preferred medium communication and the magnitude of the message you want to convey.

You can also record videos and share them via email or in a Slack channel dedicated to announcements.

Reinforce company values and vision

Your communication should reflect and emphasize your company values and vision to remind employees why they matter and the common objective you're all trying to achieve.

Provide relevant information timely. Try to share information as timely as possible .

Decentralised leadership. When communicating, set clear objectives, clearly define roles and responsibilities and be flexible.



HR Expert Says:

"One of the most rewarding aspects of work is feeling like you're an integral and valued part of your team and the wider business. However, remote workers are at risk of feeling disconnected because they operate independent from each other, the wider team and their managers. Therefore, effective communication is extremely important because it helps foster a collective team spirit which in turn improves employee morale and leads to more efficient work. To promote effective communication when working remotely, it is important to; ensure regular check ins with the remote workers based on their health and wellbeing, set clear expectations and define their goals clearly - focusing more on value and results rather than the time taken, present information in easily digestible formats and encourage regular feedback and discussions as this helps minimise errors."

BRITISH AIRWAYS



Tom Ibirogba

HR Advisor at British Airways Plc

Research Says:



According to the **MIT Sloan Management Review**, for remote teams working in different time zones, recorded video messages are also a powerful tool. These can be watched on-demand, accommodating different schedules and replacing emails with a personal and effective messaging medium that is much higher bandwidth.

Reference: Overcoming Remote Work Challenges, MIT Sloan Management Review, 2020.

4.2 Transparency

Transparency is of the essence when communicating with remote employees.

Be honest and open, don't hide information

Now more than ever, employees need to trust you.

Ensure that you tell employers all they need to know so that they know the state of the company.

Communicate the state of the company in uncertain times

Share what you know and specify what you don't know at the time.

For example, address issues such as retrenchment, company closure, pay cuts, and the overall status of jobs in the company so that employees know where they stand.

Be careful with how you convey messages

Think of how employees will receive and perceive information. If the message bears unpleasant news, do it face-to-face or telephonically.

Watch the tone and style in which you deliver messages.

Drive employee engagement

Use employee engagement initiatives to encourage dialogue and overall sharing of information among employees.

For example FAQs to clarify messages.



HR Expert Says:

"Employees working remotely often feel a sense of detachment from other employees, especially those working in a central office space. It is important that transparent and consistent communication is done for all employees to foster a sense of trust and reduce uncertainty."



Foluso Agbaje

Head, Human Resources at
Jobberman Nigeria

Research Says:



The **Harvard Business Review** says, instead of forcing your employees to second-guess what might be in store for them, be utterly clear with them about the financial health of your firm and what goals you will prioritize. These goals will not be the same for every company, and you shouldn't communicate empty statements you don't believe in, such as "we put our employees first." These statements can be confusing and even counterproductive when people are worried about their jobs. It's better for you to be specific.

Reference: "The Coronavirus Crisis Doesn't Have To Lead To Layoffs," Harvard Business Review, 2020.

4.3 Remote Meeting Structures

Putting remote meeting structures in place leads to effective virtual meetings.

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR REMOTE MEETINGS

Choose the right tools for the meeting before notifying employees

Find out how many people can the meeting software accommodate and then decide what virtual audio and video tools to use; Google Meet, Zoom, Skype or a phone call.

Schedule meetings and notify employees

Add meeting details on their Google calendar, and specify the date, time, virtual meeting channel to be used.

Share meeting links with employees.

Set a clear agenda and guidelines for the meeting

Share with the team at least a day before or earlier if you want to have an effective productive meeting so that employees know what to expect. It also encourages them to participate knowing what's going on.

An agenda should include: key points, what each team member will be responsible for, relevant documents and files etc.

Etiquette for meetings

Set rules on what dress code should be followed, mute microphones when not speaking, camera rules, how to participate etc. For example, create platforms for team members to ask questions in an organised manner using channels such as Slido.

Avoid overwhelming employees with in-team communication. Sometimes a quick text message works better than having a meeting.



HR Expert Says:



"To ensure that employees are engaged during remote meetings, have an agenda, so that you can be prepared for meetings - stick to the meeting. You don't want to set up meetings for meeting's sake - and live on calls - some meetings can easily be an email."

Heather O'Shea
Group Head of Talent at ROAM

Research Says:



According to **Facility Executive**, one of the most important components of a work-from-home team is the virtual meeting. It can be a make-or-break aspect of your remote workforce, with everything from productivity to job satisfaction hanging in the balance.

Reference: "7 Keys To Successful Virtual Meetings," Facility Executive, 2020.

4.4 Giving Feedback

Cultivate a culture of feedback that fosters employee development and growth.

HOW TO GIVE FEEDBACK TO REMOTE EMPLOYEES

Be direct and set expectations

Inform your team that you will be providing feedback.
Emphasise that you'll have regular one-on-one and team meetings to touch-base.

Follow through and schedule

Once your team knows that you will be providing feedback, follow through and create a feedback schedule, and be assertive and ensure you uphold it.

Normalise video meetings

Face-to-face video messages capture elements such as facial expressions and body language and are good at keeping employees engaged and invested in the conversation.
If you can't do video, try a phone call, emails should be your last resort.

Avoid demotivation

Be constructive in your approach and avoid demotivation.
Identify the problem, then focus on the behaviour and its impact as opposed to making it a personal attack which demotivates the employee.

Make feedback clear

Be specific and clear with the feedback.
State what you need to communicate and then make time for discussion and questions to clarify any uncertainties.

Humanise communication

Be empathetic. Employees are going through a lot, their jobs may be safe but they may be uncertain of other aspects of their lives, such as their health and family.
Think before you give feedback; 'read the room' and be cautious with how you communicate with them.



HR Expert Says:

"The most effective way to give feedback to remote employees: Standups in the morning - always good to check in, and say good morning to all - essential, and Stand Downs in the afternoons to get a pulse on how staff are doing during the day and to pick up anything that may be battling - which is perfectly normal given the current situation and circumstances in which we now find ourselves in. Taking leave is recommended - specifically for caregivers who are now also managing the children at home and trying to still keep the workload under control. Empathy and understanding are paramount."



Heather O'Shea

Group Head of Talent at ROAM

Research Says:



According to the **Society of Human Resources Management**, good employee communication is two-way.

Reference: "Communicating With Employees During A Crisis," Society of Human Resources Management, 2016.



CHAPTER

5

Employee Performance Management & Well-being

In times of a pandemic, employee well-being becomes a paramount urgent issue, and should be handled as such. Despite the current trying times and the 'new normal' they present, employee performance management and well-being remain critical.

Employees are grappling with a new reality of a novel global pandemic, therefore, factors such as fear, anxiety, depression, panic and stress are a common human reaction during uncertain times - that can have a significant impact on employee performance and overall well-being. Hence, employers need to prioritise their employees' well-being above all else.

It is imperative for employers to understand that employee well-being comes first before productivity because your company is as good as its employees. Investing in your employees' well-being is fundamental to organisational success.

In this chapter we explore how to ensure employee well-being, how to monitor performance in remote teams, how to ensure remote KPI and goal setting, how to reward remote employees, how to handle disciplinary issues remotely, how to conduct a disciplinary hearing remotely, how to issue a warning for misconduct and how to dismiss an employee remotely in the instance of gross misconduct.

5.1 Employee Well-being

With social distancing, self-isolation and working from home being the new status quo, employees may find it challenging to maintain the usual work routine while keeping a good work-life balance as well as positive mental health and well-being. This can be overwhelming and may cause burnout which affects their well-being.

The key components of employee well-being include: emotional, mental, physical and social well-being therefore, support employee well-being holistically.

HOW EMPLOYERS CAN ENSURE EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

Promote health wellness

Encourage employees to do self-assessments, symptom monitoring and reporting, taking sick leave when ill, or when showing symptoms of COVID-19.

Share vital resources. Since physical meetings with managers and colleagues are limited due to the pandemic, compile a mental wellness repository that employees can access and include contact details of counsellors, therapists, hotline numbers to contact in case of an emergency.

Use surveys to find out the state of employees' mental health. Whether they need professional counselling or therapy.

Physical wellness is of the essence. Encourage physical activities by sharing tips on how to work out from home. With being at home and social distancing rules, employees may experience burnout due to being in one place so they need to remain active which is good for their health.

Use a customized approach

Use a personalised approach as opposed to a one shoe-size-fits all approach because employees deal with things differently.

It is more effective to hear from them on a one-on-one basis. Practice mindfulness. Think before you share your views, be empathetic.

Set employees up for success

Don't assume employees will work effectively because they have the right technology and tools.

Train them on how to use online collaboration effectively to avoid frustrations and stress. Some employees may be used to the old-fashion way of working in the office.

Share effective ways to work virtually with fellow employees.

Use online sessions to share effective ways to work online and address ground rules on the use of collaborative technology, cultural differences in communication, including the most effective tools to use when communicating.

Encourage employees to reframe the way they look at work

Let employees find value in their work. Encourage them to focus on their favourite aspects of their job or through helping others etc.

Promote work-life balance. You can advise them to take up hobbies and focus on parts of their lives that bring them joy.

Encourage employees to take breaks, use their annual leave and get some rest to recuperate.

Encourage social time

Set up in-house virtual social channels for employees to interact with each other. For example, a Slack channel dedicated to socialising and sharing funny information or conversations that are not work-related.

Encourage fun virtual employee activities such as quizzes, 60 seconds, spelling contests etc.

Develop virtual team building activities for employees to get to know each other and socialise.

Reassure employees

Employees need to be reassured that their well-being, job security, and salaries are still safe.

Reassurance can also be done through company communication, and emphasising that employee well-being is the company's top priority through action.



HR Expert Says:

“During the working from home scenarii - have a call once a week, when you chat about anything that is not work-related. Play trivial pursuit, or have staff post pictures from high school - also a great way for them to get to know more about each other. Post the pandemic, one thing remains clear - a united organisation can overcome anything.”



Heather O'Shea

Group Head of Talent at ROAM

Research Says:



According to the **International Labour Organisation** report entitled 'Working anytime, anywhere: The effects on the world of work', remote workers tend to work longer hours and tend to blend personal and professional life, which can lead to higher levels of stress.

The **World Economic Forum** says, how employers handle their employees' well-being is fundamental to building and sustaining workforce resiliency and sending the message that employees matter.

Reference: "Working Anytime, Anywhere: The Effects On The World Of Work," International Labour Organisation, 2017.

"Workforce Principles For The COVID-19 Pandemic Stakeholder Capitalism In A Time Of Crisis," World Economic Forum, 2020.

5.2 Employee Performance

As an employer, you need to understand that it is not productivity as usual. There is a novel global pandemic that your employees are learning to live with, however, there are effective ways to manage employee performance in remote teams during the pandemic and its aftermath.

HOW TO MONITOR PERFORMANCE IN REMOTE TEAMS

Have a regular check-in

This should be one-on-one and face-to-face via video for effective communication.

Set the agenda and provide feedback and support your team's needs.

Communicate frequently

Regular communication with your team is key.

It allows you to clarify where team members may not understand and the progress/status of projects.

Manage expectations

Help your team to understand what they should do, and create realistic expectations for their work. Managing expectations involves you as the manager too. It enables you to set yourself and the team up for success.

Define the scope, deadlines and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals.

Focus on outcomes

Managing every aspect of your remote team can be challenging, especially in uncertain times. Instead of focusing on traditional office environment factors, such as the number of hours done, focus on outcomes and measure accordingly.

Equip your team with resources

Employees can't perform without the right reliable resources, to avoid affecting their performance and productivity, equip them with the right tools that enable them to do their work smoothly.

Be flexible

Employees are going through a lot, and they're trying to adapt to the 'new normal'. Even though that's not an excuse to not perform, be flexible and understanding in your approach.

Support them to use a schedule that best drives their productivity. That's why focusing on outcomes is imperative.



HR Expert Says:

"To ensure that remote employees remain productive during and post COVID-19, use a 'CAN Framework':

Care about your employees. Constantly check in on their mental health and ensure they are okay.

Automate your more administrative processes. This ensures that your employees are freeing up their time to focus on more important work.

E-Nable your employees to be productive by providing them with the right tools to do their jobs and upskilling them with the right skills."



Foluso Agbaje
Head, Human Resources at
Jobberman Nigeria

Research Says:



According to **Engage In Learning**, monitoring performance gives you the ability to assess employee efficiency, identify who is working hard and who isn't, and how to improve your workplace's overall productivity.

Reference: "Why Is Monitoring Performance Important ?", Engage In Learning, 2020.

Remote KPI and goal setting

Setting measurable goals is crucial to monitor your progress, track employees' contributions and then evaluate if you've reached your objectives.

HOW TO ENSURE REMOTE KPI AND GOAL SETTING

Identify goals that can be measured in numbers

Tying goals to specific, quantitative objectives makes clear what is required to achieve the adequate outcome.

Establishing a solid metric helps provide direction, which leads to successful remote teams.

Chapter 5: Employee Performance Management & Well-being

Break down goals into smaller tasks

Break down your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) into smaller bits, then manage and measure accordingly.

This helps you to track if the goals will be achieved on time or not, and if you need to extend timelines.

Set adequate time for goal completion

Do not underestimate the amount of time it will take you to accomplish tasks. Before setting timelines, be realistic when planning with your team, factor in 'what if' scenarios like sickness, employees on leave or other unforeseen disruptions, and thoroughly assess how much time will be required to complete tasks, and then set more attainable deadlines.

Being realistic prevents you from unnecessary pressure which may affect productivity.

Regularly review goals and adjust when necessary

Reviewing progress is key to staying on track and identifying when a project or task will be accomplished.

It also provides a clear view of progress to both the employer and employees. Reviews can be done weekly, monthly and quarterly by keeping everyone informed while ensuring that smaller tasks are completed, and that communication within the team remains strong.



HR Expert Says:

"Working remotely should not be a hindrance to achieving business objectives and so measuring performance is crucial to ensure productivity. Goals need to be realistic and achievable in the face of ongoing challenges and business realities."

Dupe Akinsiun

Country Head, Leadership & Culture
Center of Expertise, FMCG

Research Says:



According to **Info Entrepreneurs**, performance measurement and target-setting are important to the growth process. Key performance indicators (KPIs) are at the heart of any system of performance measurement and target-setting. When properly used, they are one of the most powerful management tools available to growing businesses.

Reference: The Importance Of Measurement And Target-Setting," Info Entrepreneurs, 2020.

Employee rewards

Create a reward system that boosts employee morale and productivity, and retain top talent. Something that is or can be imprinted into your company culture and reinforce it in your core values.

HOW TO REWARD YOUR REMOTE EMPLOYEES

Practical benefits

Offer practical benefits that employees can use.

They can be in the form of technology perks, home service perks, entertainment perks like Netflix subscription, workspace upgrades, health benefits, online learning and development.

Recognise special occasions

Have a calendar that stores each employee's birthday.

For example, you can create a Slack channel dedicated to birthday shout outs.

Financial incentives

You can provide money to employees to spend how they wish.

Acknowledgement

Make your employees feel like they're seen by highlighting their accomplishments.

You can do this through certificates of acknowledgement, sending messages of thanks to employees directly or announce it to the whole company through relevant channels.

This shows that you recognise their efforts and contribution to the company's growth, which makes them feel seen and appreciated.



HR Expert Says:

"Initial thoughts are you want to maintain your employee culture and value proposition, and you always want to ensure that you are sending the right messages regarding rewarding good behaviour. As such it is important to always reward employees whether or not they are working virtually or in the physical office."



Foluso Agbaje

Head, Human Resources at Jobberman Nigeria

Research Says:



According to **Employee Benefits**, when employees are all in the same office, face-to-face form of employee recognition helps to make them feel humanised in the work they do and it serves as clear acknowledgement of the value they have provided to their team and the company yet with a remote workforce, you can't do this, but it doesn't mean you shouldn't, you can still make sure that employees' hard work and achievements are recognised in an effective and timely manner.

Reference: "Why Reward And Recognition Is So Important With A Remote Workforce," Employee Benefits, 2020.

5.3 Employee Disciplinary Issues

Discipline is vital whether in a traditional work environment (office) or in remote settings. Disciplinary issues may be addressed with disciplinary decisions which can lead to subsequent actions, such as dismissals, warnings and suspensions. Even though for many employers the priority over recent months has been coping with the logistical and financial pressures caused by the coronavirus pandemic, how to handle other workplace factors such as disciplinary issues is just as important.

Best practice when conducting remote disciplinary hearings is to use video communication channels, because they allow all parties to see and understand non-verbal gestures, and give the employee an opportunity to ask questions and share their thoughts. Avoid using email because it limits two-way communication.

HOW TO HANDLE DISCIPLINARY ISSUES REMOTELY

- Thoroughly assess whether formal action is necessary.
- Consult company procedures first. What does the company policy on disciplinary issues say?
- Be reasonable. Think of a reasonable alternative since you can't conduct a disciplinary hearing the traditional way.
- Plan commencing disciplinary action. Planning is crucial to ensure everything is done right. Check what the company disciplinary policy says, choose the right investigator, decide who will handle each stage of the disciplinary process, adhere to timescales in disciplinary policy.
- Consider circumstances for each case.
- Consider investigation. Once you have assessed the situation, plan a comprehensive investigation.



HR Expert Says:

“Employers will need to consider that disciplinary hearings are uncomfortable at the best of times. In a remote setting you need to be as transparent as possible in the days leading up to the hearing to ensure your employee is okay.”



Foluso Agbaje

Head, Human Resources at Jobberman Nigeria

Research Says:



According to **Lewis Silkin**, employers should ask: Is the issue or reported incident serious enough to warrant an investigation without delay? Considering the social distancing measures currently in place, employers need to ask: is it practicable to conduct investigation meetings remotely and to collect any relevant evidence? Would delaying an investigation risk rendering the process unfair? If the answer to either of the above is 'yes', the employer should consider conducting an investigation remotely.

Reference: "Conducting Workplace Investigations Remotely;" Lewis Silkin, 2020.

HOW TO CONDUCT A DISCIPLINARY HEARING REMOTELY

- Hold a fair investigation. Gather as much information regarding the case, be thorough to avoid mistakes.
- Be transparent with your sources.
- Set up a disciplinary hearing meeting. The invite email should contain all relevant information, time and agenda and then share with the employee in question.
- Give the employee a right to be accompanied to the hearing. They can have a witness sit in.
- Inform the employee of the allegation against them via video call.



HR Expert Says:

"The best way to conduct a remote hearing is similar to how you would do it in person; ensure you plan ahead, ensure your disciplinary panel members and the employee are told where to be and when, and also ensure that you record the hearing for easy reference in the future. If you can incorporate a video call it also helps because you can read body language better."



Foluso Agbaje

Head, Human Resources at Jobberman Nigeria

Research Says:



People Management says, HR should check its internal policies to ensure there is enough flexibility to conduct the process virtually.

Reference: "How Can HR Remotely Manage Disciplinary?", People Management, 2020.

ISSUING A WARNING FOR MISCONDUCT

- If an employee fails to abide by the company rules and regulations, you are within your rights to consider taking disciplinary steps against them.
- Schedule a video call and explain to the employee what the next steps are.
- Have a video call with the employee to inform them of the outcome of the hearing.
- Confirm the outcome in writing for paper trail purposes and send it to them via email. Depending on the severity of the misconduct, and the consistency of workplace discipline, you will be able to issue a verbal warning, written warning, and/or a final written warning.
- Give the employee a right of appeal.



HR Expert Says:

“Employers will need to ensure that employees are fully aware of and understand the details outlined in their employment contract, code of conduct and employee handbook.”

The warning should not contradict any other documents that have previously been shared with the employee when they were not working in a remote environment.”



Foluso Agbaje

Head, Human Resources at Jobberman Nigeria

Research Says:



Employment Hero says the first step in any official warning procedure is to try and resolve the issue verbally with the employee as part of an informal warning to advise them that they aren't meeting the expectations of their role. While this isn't written, you do need to detail the specific areas of underperformance.

Reference: “Official Warning Procedures,” Employment Hero, 2019.

HOW TO DISMISS AN EMPLOYEE REMOTELY IN THE INSTANCE OF GROSS MISCONDUCT

Plan ahead

Draw up a checklist of what should be done. Gather information regarding return of company property, final pay and benefits, and crosscheck if your process is in line with labour laws.

Use video

The employee needs to see your face as video is the most effective way to communicate with remote workers.

They need to read your body language and engage thoroughly with the issue-at-hand.

Don't prolong the news

Don't wait for the day to end to deliver the news, the sooner you inform the employee the better.

Schedule a meeting, and do it early in the morning. It's cruel and unnecessary to hold someone whom you've decided to dismiss.

Have a witness on the video call, it's best practice

Get someone from HR or the operations team to be present during the conversation to help buffer difficult moments but also help observe the situation in case a lawsuit arises.

Tell the employee who is participating in the video call or phone call and that you're recording the meeting. Deliver the news with compassion and sensitivity.

Get to the point

Be clear and precise; get straight to the point. Say everything you need to say before you let them respond.

Explain severance package, its terms and conditions, e.g. return of company property, signing termination agreement and confidentiality etc.

Tell the employee that you will follow up with appropriate documents by mail. Stipulate that you've been mindful of the whole process and the decision, and ask if they have any questions once you've finished explaining.

Take some time to answer questions

Respond to their questions and ensure everything is clear. Encourage the conversation so that they leave with closure.

Liaise with the IT/tech department

Facilitate login removals and divert their emails to yourself.

Create a plan to inform the team

Determine how you will deliver the news to the team. Share news during a meeting. Follow up with an announcement on Slack and highlight the dismissed employee's contribution to the company and well wishes.



HR Expert Says:

"Before dismissing an employee for gross misconduct during remote times consider: Severity of the case, was a disciplinary investigation done, if yes, what was the recommendation, if misconduct is established, then formal feedback should be given to the staff in line with your policy- ensuring that all the disciplinary processes were adhered is key."

Gloria Ibeziako

Head of People, Performance and Culture, KPMG Nigeria



Research Says:



According to **Global Compliance News**, employers may continue with the inquiry, in line with the policy as far as possible, using available technology. Provided the employer adheres to the basic requirements of procedural fairness, linked with those policy elements it can reasonably follow during the lockdown, the employer should be able to sustain a challenge on the procedural fairness of a termination during lockdown.

Reference: "South Africa: Dismissing An Employee During The COVID-19 Lockdown," Global Compliance News, 2020.

A background image showing two professionals, a man and a woman, working together at a desk in an office. The man is on the left, looking at a laptop, and the woman is on the right, looking at a folder. The image is overlaid with a blue and orange gradient and a white line that curves around the chapter number.

CHAPTER

6

Post-Crisis HR Strategy

The COVID-19 pandemic has birthed a 'new normal' which requires a new mindset in the workplace. The nature of work is changing rapidly as it is more collaborative, innovative and faster-paced than ever before.

Being adaptable and embracing change is the only way to go. Hence employers should devise a comprehensive post-crisis HR strategy to lead them into the future.

In this chapter we explore change management steps namely; planning for change management, developing a stakeholder communications strategy, training and development for change management and reinforcement.

How And When To Formulate, Communicate And Ensure Buy-in

Employers should formulate a robust change management framework that will minimise the impact of change on their business, employees and other key stakeholders.

Step 1: Planning

The first phase of an effective change management plan is planning. It should look at the following components:

Estimate the impact of change

Prepare for unforeseen costs. Consult your organisational chart to assess which teams and individuals will be highly affected by the coming change.

Create a change management team

The team should represent every department in your organisation that will be affected by the change.

The change management team should meet and ensure broader buy-in and that all stakeholders' voices are heard to allow for a comprehensive overview.

Establish a timeline for the change

Apply your project management skills to determine when the change will start, when it will fully be implemented, and the achievements you need to reach during the course of the process to stay on schedule.



HR Expert Says:



"A change management plan is important for post-crisis. It is very key in building employee engagement, builds trust and helps show employees that the employer cares (empathy), and it also helps the employer gauge employee mental preparedness."

Gloria Ibeziako

Head of People, Performance and Culture, KPMG Nigeria

Research Says:



According to **SmartSheet**, a change management plan helps manage the change process, and also ensures control in budget, schedule, scope, communication, and resources. The change management plan will minimize the impact a change can have on the business, employees, customers, and other important stakeholders.

Reference: "Expert Guide To Writing An Effective Change Management Plan," SmartSheet.

Step 2: Develop a stakeholder communications strategy

An effective communications strategy should have an in-depth understanding of the organization, stakeholders and change impacts. Ensure that you communicate with employees throughout the process and respond to their concerns. A communication strategy should look at the following components:

Review employee safety and security

Have a health and safety plan in place, in addition to an emergency procedure. Involve employees in safety planning. Teach your employees about safety and security. Cultivate a culture of safety and security.

If you intend on opening the workplace once the lockdown is lifted; craft a comprehensive checklist which focuses on disinfecting the office environment, create a risk analysis, acquire the right safety products like sanitisers, PPE etc, train employees to comply with the rules, draw up social distancing measures and develop a strong support system.

Review travel rules

Consult government regulations on travel before reviewing travel rules. If employees need to travel, who needs to approve them? What requirements do they need on their travels?

Review HR policies

Conduct a thorough assessment of your HR policies to determine which ones are still valid or need to be updated to adapt to the future of work.

Policies such as: employment contracts, leave (e.g.vacation, sick, maternity and paternity leave), pay procedures, discipline, termination, etc.

Review remote policies

Evaluate if your organisation will continue with remote work or not.

Develop checks and balances on remote policies to understand which ones worked and which ones need to be refined.

Review financial indicators and customers

Be informed regularly of financial markets and their possible influence on your business.

In addition, evaluate the supply chain to understand the impact of the disruption on customers.



HR Expert Says:

"A change management plan cannot be implemented without a strong and effective communication strategy. For the organisation to buy into the change, they have to see the value in the change and this can only be done through clear and concise communication in the organisation. Based on my experience, co-creating the communication strategy while designing the change management plan is the most effective way to ensure a seamless as possible change implementation in an organisation."

Isioma Coker

Team Lead, HR Advice at
Multinational Energy Company

M.E.C

Research Says:



According to the **Standing Partnership**, communications help employees better understand the change – the reason, benefits, impact to them and their role. In addition, it helps them get involved in change, helping them feel empowered to commit and engage in the desired change.

Reference: "The Important Role Of Strategic Communications in Change Management," Standing Partnership, 2015.

Step 3: Training & Development

Training and development allows employees to adapt to change and learn new ways of doing things while feeling equipped in the process.

Training, mentoring & coaching

Set up a plan to educate and develop your employees.

Draw up learning, mentoring & coaching opportunities to ensure employee growth and development. Coaching employees to pause and take stock of the current situation is imperative.

Training can also be about new technology and how to use it effectively

Look for cost-effective ways to upskill your workforce, which could involve making use of internal talent to help with knowledge sharing.

Create an organisational remote working guide

Analyse if any more remote tools are required by employees.

Assess if the tools are reliable. Develop a remote working guide addressing ways to work remotely post-COVID-19 and provide remote working training to prepare your workforce for the future.



HR Expert Says:

“Training and development helps to sensitize and enlighten employees, get buy-in, reinforce the need for embracing the new. Without training and development change management will experience a lot of hitches and complaints. It takes a lot for the human mind to unfreeze. Training and development can help curtail the fears and curiosity of employees in the organisation.”

Ogbleba Moses

Head, Human Resources, Axon Analytics Limited



Research Says:



According to **goFLUENT**, Training is the cornerstone of change management. In order for people to bring about change effectively and learn adaptable and buildable skills, they should receive timely and appropriate training. Each employee will develop training requirements based on the skills, knowledge and behaviors necessary to implement the change.

Reference: "How Training Leads To Effective Change Management," goFLUENT, 2017.

Step 4: Reinforcement

Follow up to ensure that every phase in the change management process operates smoothly.

Follow up with training

Do thorough checkups to ensure training is effective.

Find out if employees are using new software and any other technology required, and get their feedback.

Continued communication

Communication is a key component of every process of change management. Communicate regularly and re-emphasise key factors of change management.

Monitor the situation

Once you have implemented the change, keep monitoring how everything is doing.



HR Expert Says:

"Communication is a key driving force in reinforcing change management. Be clear on the following: what to communicate, purpose of communication, who is the recipient: It is important to define, when to communicate, how to communicate and who should communicate. Review adoption of new changes being introduced. This will help you track progress so that the necessary updates can be made per time in order to further reinforce change."

Dupe Akinsiun

Country Head, Leadership & Culture
Center of Expertise, FMCG

Research Says:



Harvard Business Review on leading your team into a post- pandemic world, "As companies begin work on inventing a future that does not exist yet, they would be wise to mobilize the business understanding and sense of purpose of their employees as input to their planning process. A strong focus on the purpose of the company, as opposed to its existing business model, can uncover and unleash significant new growth."

Reference: "Lead Your Team Into A Post-Pandemic World," Harvard Business Review, 2020.

Conclusion

Employers must understand that a company is only as good as its staff on any given day, and change is the only constant, therefore, how you deal with uncertain times will leave footprints on your brand.

Employers will be judged by how they handled their workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, which is likely to have a great impact on the future. It is key to promote a climate of calmness while also engaging timely, accurate, assertive, clear, and consistent communication from all levels of the organization. The approach should always come from a place of empathy and understanding of the different impacts situations like this have on people, from the physical to the mental.

In all, managing your workforce during the COVID-19 and into the future is not a one-dimensional approach; it starts with embracing change. Employers must be agile, creative, adaptable and cautiously implement custom practices to keep the business and employees afloat by comprehensively creating holistic ways that improve their hiring decisions, hiring processes, remote working policies, effective employee communication, employee performance and well-being as well as the post-crisis HR strategy to deal with disruptions in the future.

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