

Returning to the Workplace: Post-Pandemic Considerations

Reopening your business may feel like the light at the end of the shutdown tunnel. It is the first step toward opening the economy and [restoring normalcy](#) to everyday lives. However, until there is a vaccine, it is crucial to remain vigilant by taking preventative measures to protect the health and wellness of your staff and the communities you serve.

There are multiple factors to measure before reopening your business. Every aspect of operations must consider the health and safety of your community. There are five areas of business operations to consider upon returning to work:

1. [Communication](#)
2. [Prevention](#)
3. [Social Distancing](#)
4. [Empathy](#)
5. [Health Procedures](#)

1. Communication: Remain Transparent

Continued transparency and clarity are vital to your reopening. Prevent confusion among your team by answering these questions before opening your business.

- Where will your employees find supplies?
- Who will be responsible for providing supplies?
- What parts of their workspace will be closed?
- Will conference rooms and cafeterias remain open?
- Who will be allowed in the building, and when?
- What gear will be required to enter the building? Face masks? Gloves?

Communicate with your employees through any and all means. Host online meetings, make phone calls or send out mass texts and emails. Once your workplace reopens, post CDC signage in entryways, bathrooms and other common areas.

2. Prevention: Protective Gear and Supplies

Have a healthy supply of protective and preventative gear for your employees. Make sure they have access to face masks, gloves, wipes and hand sanitizer. Establish a survey with clear questions for employees to answer before they can return to the office. These questions can include:

- Do you have COVID-19?
- Did you have COVID-19?

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4. Empathy: We're All in this Together

Every person faces a unique impact from the novel coronavirus and deserves respect and kindness from their community, including their employer. Practice empathy and offer accommodations whenever possible when working with your staff to individualize their return to the workplace.

Consider the possible situations your employees faced or are still facing.

- Testing positive for COVID-19.
- Caring for a loved one that is infected.
- Conducting homeschool for their children.
- Losing a loved one to the virus.

Keep these things in mind while speaking with your employees and establishing protocols for your office.

5. Health Procedures

Your Questions: Answered

There's no handbook to the '[new normal](#)' of business. Everyone has questions as we face these unprecedented times.

What do I do if an employee shows symptoms of COVID-19?

- Send them home immediately if they aren't already working from home.
- Advise them to contact their doctor immediately.
- Advise them to keep their direct report updated on their status.
- Deep clean the office if the employee has been there during the last 14 days.
- Notify Human Resources to send information on how to self-monitor and self-quarantine at home.
- They should not return to the office until symptoms are gone for 72 hours, without the use of symptom-reducing medication.

What do I do if an employee tests positive for coronavirus?

- If they learn of this while in office, send them home immediately.
- Notify all office employees of the exposure and send them home.
- Deep clean the office.
- Close the office for 14 days.
- Identify and notify any employees from other offices who may have visited the office in the last 14 days.
- Advise all employees to self-monitor for 14 days, and to reach out to a doctor if they start to exhibit symptoms.

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- Should the employee develop symptoms or test positive for the virus, follow the guidelines above.

What do I do if an employee's family member is possibly exposed to coronavirus?

- Send the employee home immediately if they aren't already working from home.
- Advise them to self-monitor for 14 days.
- Advise them to keep their direct report updated on their status.
- Deep clean the office if the employee has been in the office during the last 14 days.
- Notify Human Resources to send information on how to self-monitor.
- Should the employee or their family member develop symptoms or test positive for the virus, follow the guidelines above.

What do I do if COVID-19 is present in the offices of another business in our building?

- Share any communications from building maintenance with all office members and company leadership.
- Identify, contact and share details with any employees from other offices who may have visited the building in the last 14 days.
- Close the office for 14 days.
- Ensure that building owners plan to deep clean all building facilities. If not, schedule one.
- Advise employees to self-monitor for 14 days and keep their direct reports abreast of their situations.
- Advise Human Resources to send information to all office employees on how to self-monitor and conduct proper social distancing at home.
- Should an employee develop symptoms or test positive for the virus, follow the guidelines above.

Remember that **empathy is key**. Every person faces a unique impact from the novel coronavirus. Returning to work and embracing the [new normal](#) is an adjustment for everyone. But, with proper planning, you can help make the transition of reopening your business feel as safe and as smooth as possible.

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