

Return to Work or Remain at Home?

Considerations for your Business After COVID-19

Deciding between a return to centralized workplaces or to remain working from home is a big call for employers. The chart below offers considerations in several key areas to help you decide what's best for your business.

Management Considerations

Return to work if:

Remain at home if:

1 How successful has the enforced period of remote working been?

- Have productivity levels been maintained?
- Has childcare or other responsibilities impacted?
- Have staff collaborated effectively?

Business productivity has significantly reduced or ceased entirely.

Staff have been unable to effectively collaborate on shared objectives.

Productivity has been maintained or enhanced.

Outside responsibilities haven't negatively impacted on the ability of staff to work.

2 Does one option deliver better to company objectives?

Having staff together in a centralized workplace produces stronger company performance.

Company performance is equal regardless of where staff are based.

3 What cost benefits exist for each option?

There are direct financial benefits (e.g. cashflow from retail operations).

There are significant reductions in business overheads.

4 Are there significant, tangible risks to employee health?

- Are government warnings or health advisories in place?

There are no tangible known risks to employee health.

Employees are at risk from current conditions.

5 Do employees need to return to a centralized location in order to perform their jobs?

- Do they work in healthcare, manufacturing, warehouse, education, frontline retail or similar environments?

Employees cannot perform their duties effectively (or at all) from remote workplaces.

Employees can perform their duties remotely without impediment.

6 Can regular business operations be fully managed remotely?

The business can only operate at reduced capacity remotely.

The business can operate fully and without significant restriction remotely.

Workspace Considerations

Return to work if:

Remain at home if:

1 How easy is it to manage physical changes required to your working environment?

- Do you need to change seating configurations?
- Do you need to install divider screens?
- Do you need to organize additional sanitation protocols?
- Are changes required to common spaces like kitchens and bathrooms?

It's possible to effect the changes required to your workplace in order to bring it up to new standards required.

Implementing the changes are achievable.

The nature of your workplace means it's impossible to effect the changes required.

The cost/effort required to implement changes are prohibitive to the business.

2 What regulatory restrictions are either in force or required?

- Is there an increased security risk from working at home?
- How prohibitive are mandated regulations around social distancing, hygiene, travel etc. at work?

Regulatory restrictions don't prohibit effective working in your workplace.

There are significant potential risks in continuing to work remotely.

Regulations would inhibit effective working in your normal workplace.

There is little risk in maintaining a remote working model.

3 Does access to certain areas of the workplace need to be restricted, regulated or removed?

- For example shared coffee machines, kitchen implements etc.

Any restrictions can be easily managed or have negligible impact.

Restrictions to areas of your workplace would be so prohibitive to business operations as to significantly impact performance.

Departmental Considerations

Return to work if:

Remain at home if:

1 Are there unique considerations for each department which impact the ability of staff to perform their duties?

- Are HR prepared with responses to employee questions/concerns/resistance?
- Do IT have the necessary technology setup, or do they need to procure further equipment?
- Is there a need for a centralized call center?

Departments providing business-critical services can only, or best, do so from a central workplace.

Department heads and line managers are prepared with information and resources to maintain productivity and address employee questions.

All business-critical services can be delivered through remote working.

The business situation is sufficiently unclear that management cannot adequately maintain business operations or address employee concerns.

2 Are all relevant return to work policies, processes and protocols updated and communicated to staff?

- Would the absence of these increase the risk of infection or potential for litigation?

All necessary policies etc. are updated and staff are aware of the changes.

Policies etc. haven't been updated and unlikely to be so in the next fortnight.

Employee, Customer and Stakeholder Considerations

Return to work if:

Remain at home if:

1 Are staff keen/willing to return to the workplace?	Staff are keen or prepared to return, even if under certain assurances.	Staff are widely unwilling to return to work. Permitting the continuation of remote working is acceptable to the business.
2 Are there benefits to customers in returning to the workplace?	Having staff able to access their normal workplace enables better service provision to customers.	Providing service to customers isn't affected by access to central workplaces.
3 Are there benefits to other external stakeholders (e.g. partners, vendors or the media) in returning to the workplace?	Relationships with stakeholders would be improved with staff working from a central workplace.	Stakeholder relations aren't affected by working remotely.

It is the responsibility of businesses to assess whether it is right for them to return, to weigh up these considerations and to follow their own local government guidelines. These considerations are provided only as a guide to enable businesses to make the right decision for their circumstances. We encourage businesses to build upon this for their own situation.

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www.snapcomms.com

USA +1 805 715 0300

UK +44 203 355 3152

NZ +64 9 950 3360