



PEOPLE AND PRODUCTIVITY: PWC'S APPROACH TO HELPING CLIENTS COPE WITH COVID-19

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April 14, 2020

► FIRST: CONFIRM STATUS

Every company needs to know whether its workforce can be productive on any given day — an issue that hardly seemed critical or hard to measure at the start of 2020. Now, getting a daily picture of potential productivity has become an ongoing challenge for many companies navigating COVID-19, raising questions around what percentage of the workforce can be expected to be productive. On April 1 PwC launched a solution, Status Connect, to address that challenge while still conforming to privacy and security standards. At its core, the solution allows administrative professionals within an organization to know what percentage of the workforce in any specific geography and/or business group has an issue preventing them from working effectively. With that information, particularly as daily responses turn into trends, a company can deploy additional resources where needed, forecast potential slowdowns, and gain insights into what kinds of underlying problems hold back the company's overall productivity.

Initially the solution offered employees only two choices, technology and other, in essence to gauge what is challenging their ability to work effectively, but PwC has already expanded the choices to technology, mobility/travel, business supply and well-being. PwC leaders noted that some clients already adopting the solution anticipated needing a more complex set of options to gain meaningful

IMMEDIATE HELP CONNECTING DURING A DISCONNECTED TIME

Who is working from home? Do they have everything they need? Can they stay connected? Are they OK? Companies around the world have been struggling to answer those questions in recent weeks as the COVID-19 virus became a global pandemic and suddenly forced many workers, and their employers, to adjust to remote working. As human resource policies, security concerns, connectivity and productivity have all been challenged, PwC U.S. rolled out a solution to answer the most basic and pressing question: "Are you able to work today?" With a simple interface, a quick and anonymous process, and with security and privacy baked in, PwC's solution helps clients quickly determine what percentage of their workforce is enabled to work effectively and what percentage has issues with technology, mobility, supplies or well-being. If widely adopted, the solution should pave the way for a second PwC product: an application designed to help track and trace employees in the event of someone contracting COVID-19. In TBR's view, these paired solutions demonstrate a concrete and immediate response — from idea to launch in five weeks — to some of the issues facing global companies during the pandemic and should set PwC's clients up to better understand and manage remote working productivity in a post-COVID-19 world.



insights, until PwC explained the richness of data insights available across a large population based on a simple user experience. As the firm continues developing Status Connect, it is adding gamification to enhance the sense of community and drive adoption and commitment to using the solution every day, as well as daily custom broadcast messages and company customizations. Notably, the firm has implemented the solution across some parts of the U.S. member firm, but not yet globally.

As TBR has previously noted: “With risk permeating every business conversation and PwC accelerating investments in digital-related offerings, including PwC Connected Solutions, which sits within its Risk and Regulatory Platform business, the firm has prepared for the next wave of opportunities. Trading on trust remains at the core, especially as the politics of data continue to disrupt PwC and its clients. Becoming customer zero keeps PwC consistent with peers, while pulling in risk differentiates, particularly against non-Big Four competitors. But the firm creates a good use case for embracing digital when it comes to managing risk.” PwC is not immune to COVID-19 and all of the workforce management implications that come with it. Adopting the solution internally is certainly the proper next step as the firm strives to protect its spot in the market as the shift to digital operations elevates the strategic importance of risk and compliance functions.

➤ **SECOND: TRACE**

When the world begins to return to normal, a new challenge for employers will be reacting rapidly, accurately and precisely when an employee contracts COVID-19 or any other contagious virus. Officewide shutdowns and broad approaches to a problem understood to be localized and limited will simply not be acceptable, from a policy or risk perspective. To tackle this, PwC has developed an application, called Automatic Contact Tracing (ACT), which allows employees’ phones to share location data, including proximity and duration. That data can then be used to rapidly determine which employees have been in close and sustained contact with an employee who develops a virus. The application stays at the enterprise level, essentially shutting off when an employee is no longer within the physical confines of the employer’s space. With the app measuring varying degrees of proximity and duration, the company can determine which employees need to take action immediately and which employees are at a lower risk. In contrast to Status Check, for which employees need only a link to a cloud-based solution, ACT will be deployed as a software development, although they will not be required to actively turn the solution on and off. According to PwC leaders, this solution will go live in May and is expected to be deployed by clients with workforces returning to their physical offices.

➤ **THIRD: ADOPT, DISSEMINATE, SCALE AND LEARN**

PwC leaders emphasized a few core elements in a discussion with TBR. First, both solutions had to be designed to be “globally privacy-ready” to allow for global deployment by large-scale, multinational clients. Second, the firm is waiving fees for Status Connect through September 2020, charging a fee only for customizations or additional analytics as the data is collected. And third, PwC anticipates these tools will remain useful to clients after the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for employees in the healthcare and energy sectors, as well as for crisis management during hurricane season and for field and seasonal worker management, to name a few. In TBR’s view, designing a solution to meet an immediate need, with constraints around privacy and security, and providing it for free to clients now gives PwC an opportunity to accelerate adoption, reach enough scale to ensure the solution is meaningful, tested and sustainable, and embed the tool within clients’ organizations, making it an accepted part of everyday working life.



» COVID-19 NOW, PRODUCTIVITY LATER

In discussing both solutions, jointly called “Check In,” PwC leaders noted the value to various parts of their clients’ organizations, including CFOs who can better anticipate financial impacts and talent management professionals who can use trend analysis to better deploy resources and support staff. Over the longer term, if these solutions become widely adopted, PwC clients would also be able to more accurately measure and predict productivity, potentially restructuring and rebalancing workforces based on lessons learned from this current pandemic and trends uncovered through the ways people are working around and through the challenges to remote activities. To understand how this particular set of products illustrates PwC’s overall products and platforms strategies as well as potential changes more broadly to enterprises’ physical office space, staffing and support decisions, TBR will watch closely to see how widely PwC adopts these two solutions internally.

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