

Reboot: Getting back to the workplace

As the Malaysian economy reopens, business leaders are reflecting on how they can play a role to restart Malaysia and what they can do to restore businesses. Parameters are being set around reopening businesses, however, bringing your people back onsite successfully won't be as simple as flipping a switch. Addressing the concerns of your people and rebuilding their trust will be essential in easing them back to the workplace in these unique times.

As per PwC's [COVID-19 CFO Pulse Survey](#) (week of 4th May), 74% of Malaysian CFOs believe it will take 3 months to more than a year to get back to 'business as usual'. Every company is unique; some have knowledge workers who may be able to continue working remotely, while others have factories to restart or brick-and-mortar retail locations to revive. But each company faces the same concerns: where to begin, how to keep people protected, when to communicate, and what's the right way to move forward.

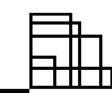
How your business will look and function in this new environment depends on multiple factors. You won't be able to control all of those factors, but you can embrace some of them now to accelerate your workforce strategy for both the short and long term. By using data and insights to drive decisions, you can manage new operations, technologies and ways of working, while meeting the needs of your people and your business as you move forward.

What do I need to do to be ready to bring people back to the workplace?

Manage health and safety

Use data as your guide.

- **Develop a plan to address and help mitigate workplace illness.** As many employees head back to the workplace, they are likely to encounter others who have continued to work on-site as essential workers or those who have different distancing practices than they do. This may concern returning workers. In fact, 87% of Malaysian CFOs surveyed said their organisations are planning to change workplace safety measures and requirements. As you address workplace health and safety, enterprise tools like Contra ([refer to page 4](#)), which are geo-gated to the confines of your work facilities can help provide privacy and identify potential risks of exposure quickly.
- **Model a phased return-to-workplace plan, by site and type of job, using data, not dates.** To understand risks and safety issues that could come up at each worksite, use data/trends on COVID-19 to guide your decisions as well as any location specific return-to-workplace guidelines and predictive behavior analytics. Anticipate and plan for recurrences of stay-home measures.
- **Execute risk measures and controls that are specific to COVID-19.** Build a framework to manage and monitor legal and operational risks and procedures related to a return to the workplace, to help support your people's health and safety, business continuity and near term new ways of working. This includes setting expectations for suppliers, vendors and others who come in contact with your workers and facilities.



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Develop a plan and strategy

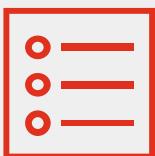
Focus on people, productivity and how you work.



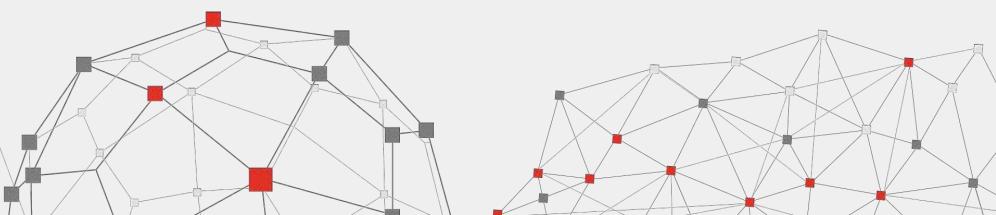
Prioritise action and problem-solving through empowerment and trust. Develop an **overall workforce strategy and action plan** that puts people first, that includes a consistent data-driven decision-making approach, and puts appropriate risk and controls in place to enable your people's health and safety, business continuity and, near term, new ways of working.



Determine who needs to return to the workplace. According to the CFO Pulse survey, nearly half (**48% of Malaysian CFOs**) say they're planning to make remote work a permanent option for roles that allow it. Confirm that your strategy addresses operations, policies, infrastructure, the needs of individuals who will work on-site, or remotely on either a temporary or indefinite basis.



Develop a return to workplace playbook. Mobilise and empower a transition office with the right governance structure, which is focused on return to the workplace to deliver on all aspects of the plan: workforce, customers, workplace needs, health and safety, and revenue and cost modelling, among other areas. The transition office should also channelise employee concerns and address them quickly.



Lead and communicate changes

Be guided by purpose, optimism and clarity.

- **Go long on your purpose.** Make decisions with a “no regrets” policy whenever possible. You won’t regret making decisions that focus on the safety of your employees or your company’s role in the community.
- **Inspire and teach managers new ways to lead.** The past two months have challenged leaders to think about how to engage and inspire their teams in a time of uncertainty and constant change. Elevate success stories, and provide clear guidance and plans for how to maintain those practices.

Operate under changed demands

Adapt to what's next as conditions change.

- **Build scenarios of your workforce needs in real time.** Segment employees, sequence facility openings and, for office employees, make plans to operate at 35% to 50% of in-person capacity for an extended period. From new specialty positions to shifting resources or headcount changes, build in data-driven analyses to help reduce costs and preserve jobs where possible.
- **Accelerate digital and remote ways of working.** Currently, **90% of Malaysian CFOs** believe that work flexibility is good for the company in the long run. To enable this, you need to enhance current processes and ensure usage of new technologies.
- **Find cost-effective ways to improve your core operations.** Consider a **managed services or contractual workforce**, so you can get the expertise you might not have in-house and scale up or down quickly.
- **As you return to the workplace, you won't be going back to the same ways of working.** Embrace and evolve behaviors and **new ways of working** that make sense for your workplace. This may include changes or new working in shifts arrangements, reconfiguring worksites to promote physical distance, accelerating automation and reducing real estate footprint.



Rethink facilities and technology

Consider how and where people work.

- **Double down on automation and accelerate moves to digital.** You've now seen first-hand which manual processes have stood in the way of operating efficiently, so improve or replace those processes. [Speed up digital adoption](#), starting with technologies and processes that enable your employees to be more productive. Companies that already had been operating more digitally have been able to manage better during this crisis.
- **Evaluate your real estate footprint.** Consider what might be permanent — or will last for at least the next year or so: reduced worksite capacities and an increased number of permanently remote positions. [Use data-driven insights](#) to pinpoint where you can reduce costs.
- **Training is essential to adopting new policies and guidelines.** Plan training on new safety measures for in-facility returning workers. Solidify new practices and incorporate virtual training for those who are working remotely for the long haul. Expect issues to arise and be prepared to address them.
- **Plan for and execute investments for must-haves.** You have to meet different demands for tools and infrastructure, and stay compliant with regulatory requirements that may change frequently. Stay up to date on what's required and what your people need to stay productive.

Build empathic policies and culture

Be sensitive to the situations your people face.

- **Plan work schedules with a people-first approach.** Take into account not just physical distancing needs, but also the concerns of employees who suddenly have new responsibilities at home or have health worries. Recommend or provide options for alternate, safe transportation, if needed, particularly for those who rely on public transportation.
- **Understand workers' needs by enhancing employee listening.** Then, **define and implement policies** to account for employees' individual constraints and comfort levels, including underlying health issues, child care, etc.
- **Reevaluate performance measures, employees' concerns and productivity blockers.** Implement employee preference analytics to better develop a workforce strategy that is agile and can act and react quickly. Reevaluate and realign business performance, individual performance and compensation structures that are appropriate for the conditions in your business.
- **Focus on the well-being of your people.** Consider new or refreshed employee well-being programmes to demonstrate care and help reduce emotional, physical and mental stress due to the current environment. Understand the top constraints of your workforce and help your people work productively at times when they can be most effective.



What's next?

It's uncharted territory. Developing an initial plan also requires a level of flexibility and agility for what is likely to be a 12-to-18 month journey that could include changes in health outcomes, virus spread and business conditions.

As we move toward work that looks very different than it did just recently, it's more important than ever to be guided by data-driven insights around your people, processes, financials and risks. This will give you the knowledge you need to act with confidence.

Contacts



Martijn Schouten

PwC South East Asia
Consulting People &
Organisation Leader

+65 8522 7609
martijn.schouten@pwc.com



Indra Dhanu Dipak

Director, People &
Organisation,
PwC Malaysia

+6019 2141 250
indra.dhanu.dipak@pwc.com



Lim Kwan-Sek

Director, People &
Organisation,
PwC Malaysia

+6012 3355 456
kwan-sek.lim@pwc.com

www.pwc.com/my

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Contra

Contra is PwC's bluetooth enabled contact tracing solution aiming to help your employees practice social distancing while ensuring data privacy, and accuracy of information.

Connected Performance

Connected Performance is a team management platform that provides a one-stop-shop for engaging remote workers.

By combining coaching with smart technology and data, we can create highly connected, engaged remote workers.

Contact us to find out more about these solutions.