

COVID-19: Restarting business post Singapore's Circuit Breaker

Asking the right questions and addressing key issues
May 2020



After two months of Circuit Breaker, Singapore businesses are eager to restart operations. Returning to work will not mean returning to work the way we left it, however. Businesses will need to balance restarting operations with ensuring safety, compliance and long term resilience.

Management teams will need to ask themselves the right questions and focus on addressing the key issues listed below, to arrive at the best decisions and actions to navigate the new normal.

Three key issues for management to focus on:

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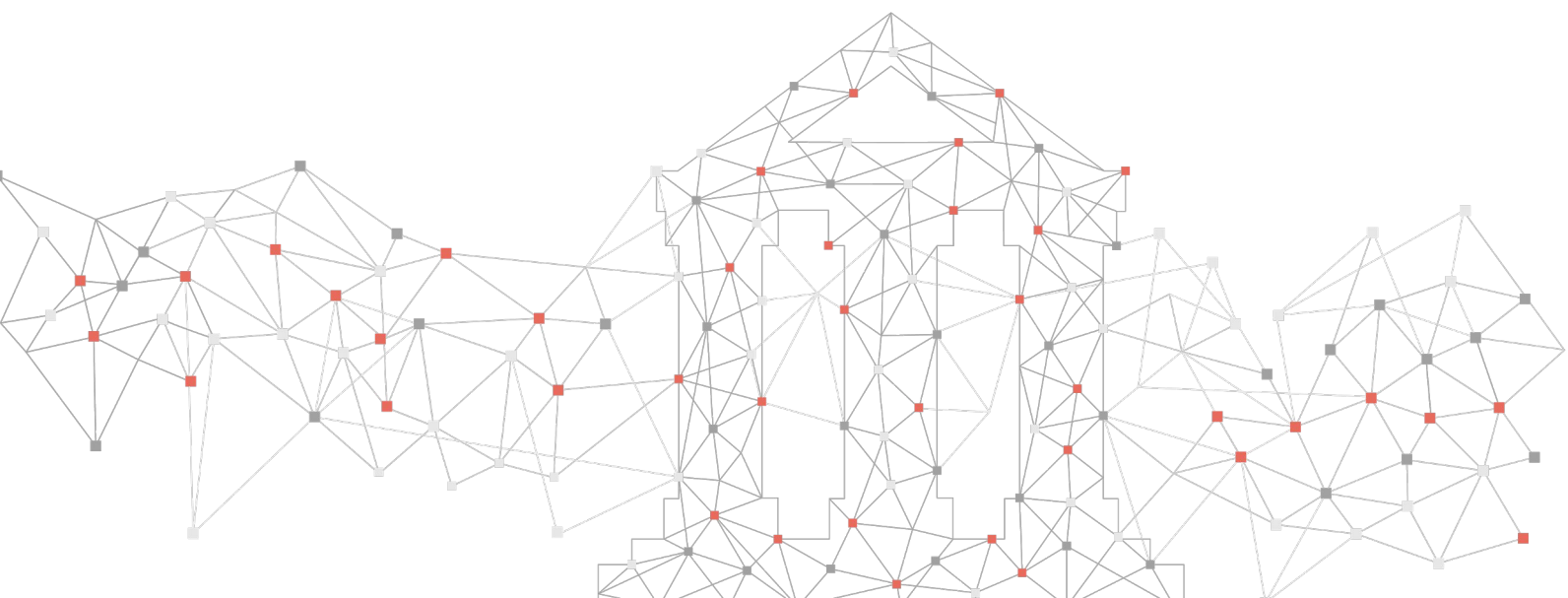
Complying with
MOM's advisory

2

Rethinking business models,
embracing new ways of working

3

Practical actions
for the restart



Key Issues

1. Complying with MOM's advisory

The Ministry of Manpower ("MOM") issued an advisory titled "[Requirements for Safe Management Measures at the workplace after Circuit Breaker period](#)" on 9 May, and was subsequently updated on 12 May.

The advisory emphasises on:



Implementing a system of Safe Management Measures at workplaces



Reducing physical interaction and ensuring safe distancing at workplaces



Supporting contact tracing requirements



Required personal protective equipment and observing good personal hygiene



Ensuring cleanliness of workplace premises



Implementing health checks and protocols to manage potential cases

To ensure compliance with this advisory and seamless transition back to work, what are some of the questions that will be top-of-mind for businesses and how can they address them?

How can management ensure compliance with the advisory?

- Understand the requirements inside out - clarify, clarify and clarify some more if there are ambiguities for businesses.
- Ensure there is a dedicated team to stay updated on the latest advisories by the government.
- Most importantly, understand and communicate the underlying purpose and spirit behind the new regulations - to not only help Singapore restart the economy, but also minimise spread by curtailing close interactions.

How can management simultaneously resume operations but also stay on guard for a potential new wave of infection?

- While any current business continuity management strategies would not be fully adequate enough to respond to such an unprecedented crisis, fully mirrored split operations has proven to be the most effective in mitigating risks as well as reducing concentration risks and controlling cross infections. Minimise the amount of last minute implementation of split operations that are not well thought through.

Key Issues



2. Rethinking business models, embracing new ways of working

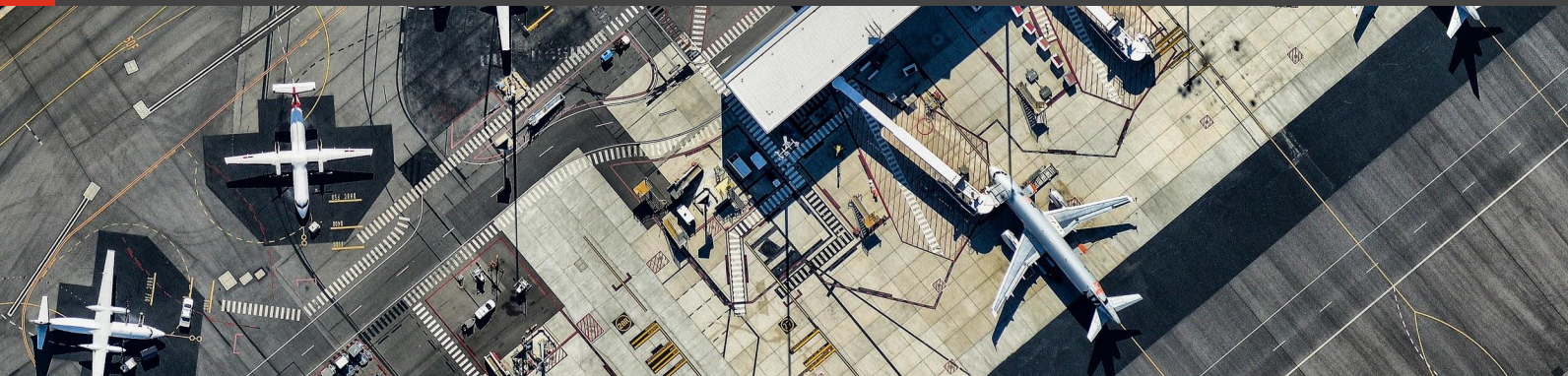
What are the good practices during circuit breaker that can become the “new normal”?

- With safe distancing measures, capacity of office premises is now significantly reduced. Remote and flexible work arrangements is now a reality that cannot be discarded even after the pandemic is over.
- Measure productivity and efficiency levels. Identify areas that were compromised and the underlying reasons behind it. It may be due to inherent process weaknesses and inefficiencies that remote working helped discover.
- The trend in hot desking, remote / flexible arrangements is not new and organisations should leverage on this situation to seriously consider ramping up its efforts. This situation has already provided a good opportunity to identify functional areas that can seamlessly work remotely without any major impact.
- Review HR policies around remote working, appraisal and compensation, maintaining employee engagement levels as remote / flexible work arrangements become the “new normal”.
- Contract tracing tools such as SafeEntry and TraceTogether can be used beyond the pandemic. It can help to account for staff wellbeing and whereabouts even for other crisis scenarios such as terrorist attacks, fire evacuation, etc.

How can the management rethink workplace policies including split operations and client delivery models and improve long-term resilience?

- Even seasoned battle-hardened business continuity management practitioners consider this pandemic as unprecedented, and a challenge to their understanding of best practices. Consistent assessment is key!
- The lines between business-as-usual and business continuity have softened. Further automation and enhancements of business-as-usual processes will help in raising the overall business resilience levels in the longer term.
- Reassure employees that their safety and wellbeing is of utmost importance.

Key Issues



3. Practical actions for the restart:

What are the other key imperatives that business leaders need to consider for their return to work strategy?

- Conduct agreed-upon procedures (AUP) reviews to identify gaps in your organisation's policy and standard operations procedures (SOP) in meeting authority's requirements
- Review organisation's business resilience framework and identify areas for improvement
- Develop dashboards for online collation of data and reporting to local authorities
- Equip project management offices with tools and solutions to manage a progressive return to work
- Review technology applications and infrastructure capabilities to support remote working, recovery strategy and security controls

Connect with our Business Resilience experts.



See Hong Pek

Partner
Business Resilience
PwC Singapore
hong.pek.see@pwc.com



Sigfried Ching

Managing Director
Business Continuity and Resilience
PwC Singapore
sigfried.sc.ching@pwc.com