



Cushion

WE KNOW HOW PEOPLE WORK



**COVID-19
Employer Playbook**

DISCLAIMER - LEGAL STATEMENT

Please be advised that some of the information contained in this document may not be applicable to other businesses or places of work. We strongly recommend that before implementing any of the ideas contained herein you carefully evaluate, and consult with outside legal counsel as appropriate, the legality, applicability and potential efficacy of this information in your place of business. Please also note that this is a “living” document that may be updated at any time by Cushion Employer Services given the fluidity of this situation.

Cushion Employer Services bears no responsibility for any circumstances arising out of or related to the adoption, or decision not to adopt, any of the practices or procedures contained in the Cushion Employer Services COVID-19 Employer Playbook.

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INTRODUCTION

To say that the COVID-19 pandemic has created an uncertain landscape for business would be an understatement. Information seems to be changing almost hourly, and as scientists and medical professionals learn more about the virus, the only certainty is that our situations will change again.

Cushion Employer Services has been monitoring the pandemic since before the first stay at home order was issued. In the following document, we present a compilation of what we consider best practices as we know them at the moment. In compiling this information, we refer constantly to the latest information available from reputable sources including:

- [The Centers for Disease Control](#)
- OSHA's [Fact Sheet](#) and [COVID-19 website](#)
- US Department of Labor's [Coronavirus Resources](#)
- Tennessee's OSHA approved [state plan](#)
- The State of Tennessee's [guidance on reopening business](#)
- The City of Nashville's [reopening plan](#)
- The City of Memphis' [reopening plan](#)
- Guidance from the [White House](#)
- The CDC's decision trees for [workplaces](#) and [restaurants and bars](#)

In reviewing our current landscape, there seems to be consensus gathering around certain thoughts. First is a general recognition that our old normal will be replaced first by an interim stage as we cope with the pandemic, and eventually by a new normal when the pandemic passes. Second is a consensus from most re-opening plans that a phased approach be taken, with contingency plans for a quick return to prior phases. Third, that employees who can work from home should continue to work from home for the foreseeable future. And finally, that essential workers who return to the workplace must be returned safely, with strong enforcement of social distancing along with modifications made to the working environment.

In this document, we present best practice information regarding the latter point, returning employees to the workplace safely. In the near future, we will present similar information with best practice information for managing a remote work force.

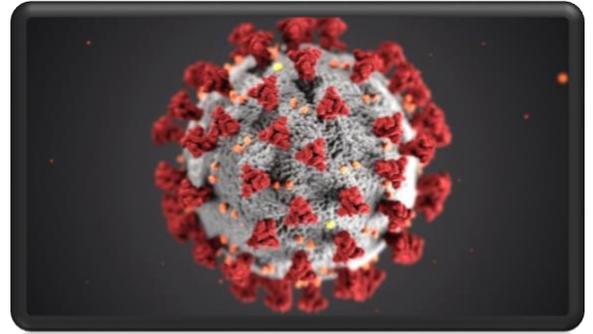
This interim stage of coping with the pandemic has created a minefield of risk for employers, including:

- Potential claims of violation of wage and hour laws
- Potential claims of violation of the FMLA, and confusion between that and the temporary Emergency FMLA
- Potential OSHA complaints
- Potential ADA refusal to accommodate or retaliation claims
- Employment discrimination
- Increased Worker's Compensation claims

Waiting for the old normal to return is a risky strategy that could lead to failure. These are times that require adaptability. What we are presenting here in this first version of the Playbook is information to help you organize your approach to the interim stage of enduring the pandemic. Cushion will remain available to assist you as we all navigate our way into the new normal.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE RESPONSE PLAN

Employers are legally liable for both employees and nonemployees infected in the workplace. It is imperative to have a policy and actionable plan in place that considers legally protected employees under the ADA, privacy issues of infected employees, recognition of risk, and the reduction of employer liability and continuing operations. An Infectious Disease Response Plan should include the following topics and should be implemented by your Pandemic Taskforce:



- Definitions
- Responsibility
- Possible Actions Taken by the Organization
- Organization Response and Closures
- Communication Plan
- Identification of Essential Employees & Business Operations
- Social Distancing Standards
- Requirements for self-reporting and RTW
 - Confidentiality of HIPPA Protected Information
- Approved Leaves and Pay
 - Company Paid Sick Leave
 - FMLA
 - FFCRA
 - Emergency Paid Sick Leave
 - Emergency Family Medical Leave
- Company Benefits
 - Short-Term Disability
- Policy Review
- RTW Plan
- Business Continuity Plan

PANDEMIC TASK FORCE

The task force should remain current on governmental guidance. Clear and consistent communication will help alleviate employee anxiety. Employers may therefore want to consider notifying employees of such teams and providing regular updates on their work and decision-making.



- **Legal**- Ensures compliance with federal, state and local laws
- **Human Resources**- Ensures compliance with federal, state and local labor laws and employee relations

- **Operations**- Provides organization, coordination and control of the company resources to ensure productivity and safety
- **Maintenance/Facilities**- Ensures functionality of the building, completing environmental updates while providing the highest efficiency
- **Housekeeping**- Ensures environmental safety and develops cleaning schedules and procedures
- **Technology**- Ensures organization is equipped to work remote and offer support in rearranging workspace in adherence to social distancing requirements
- **Security**- Partners with Operations to ensure physical safety of employees when working onsite. Provides support to IT to ensure cybersecurity

SIX READINESS ESSENTIALS

- Prepare the Building: cleaning plans, pre-return inspections, HVAC & Mechanicals checks
- Prepare the Workforce: mitigating anxiety, policies for deciding who returns, employee communications
- Control Access: protocols for safety and health checks, building reception, shipping and receiving, elevators, visitor policies
- Create a Social Distancing Plan: decreasing density, schedule management, office traffic patterns
- Reduce Touch Points and Increase Cleaning: open doors, clean desk policy, food plan, cleaning common areas
- Communicate for Confidence: recognize the fear in returning, communicate transparently, listen and survey regularly

COMMUNICATION PLAN

As we continue to monitor COVID-19 we want to clearly set employee expectations and implement policies and procedures with an emphasis on making the workforce feel secure by instituting measures to mitigate potential workplace exposure.



INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PLAN

(EMPLOYEES AND INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS)

- RTW Survey
- Office Reopening
- Policy Revision & Implementation
- Work from home (schedules)

**Work from home includes phased in approach, staggered shifts, alternate workdays, continued telework/remote work, proactive virtual training and virtual work support*

Training

- Appropriate use of PPE
- Prohibited shared use of company equipment (i.e.- computers, phones, workspace)
- Social Distancing
- Self-reporting guidelines when ill and potential exposure
- Proper hygiene expectation
- Signage and floor markings

Signs should explain that the business is compliant with Health Department's safety measures and that people should:

- Avoid entering a public facility if they have a cough, fever or other symptoms of COVID-19
- Maintain a distance of at least six feet between individuals from people who are not members of the same household
- Engage in respiratory etiquette, including covering up coughs and sneezes and properly disposing of tissues
- Do not shake hands or engage in any unnecessary physical contact

***External Communication Plan (Patrons, Vendors and Visitors) At client's discretion
you may want to strictly limit all outside visitors***

Procedures for entering the building

- Signage and floor markings (*refer to guidelines under internal communication*)
- Required PPE
- Temperature screening
- Self-Reporting

Requirements while working in or visiting the building

- PPE required
- Social distancing of 6ft

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE SICK

Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until you are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.

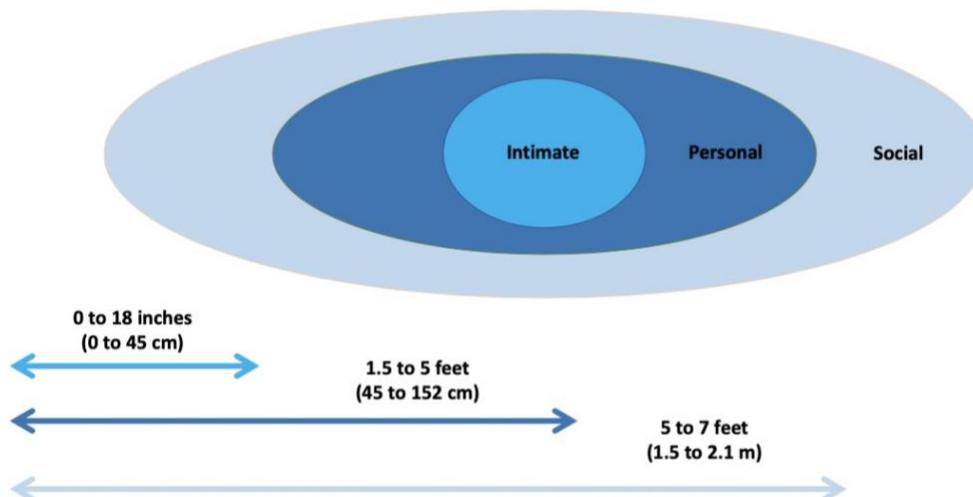


Employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day will be asked to self-quarantine from other employees in the designated isolation area and until they can leave or be transported from the campus. In this event, the supervisor should contact Human Resources to report the incident for further review of workplace considerations. If employees believe they have been exposed on the job, alert Human Resources immediately.

Tips for Creating an Isolation Room:

- Close to an exit
- Enclosed office, conference room or other space
- Preferably with a restroom contained inside the space or close proximity to a restroom that will not contaminate the traffic flow plan or workspace for other employees.
- Thermometer (to recheck temperature)
- Equipped with PPE and disinfecting supplies
- Contact tracing questionnaire
- Telephone to call EMT and contact family members if necessary

SOCIAL DISTANCING



Social distancing, also called “physical distancing,” means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To practice social or physical distancing:

- Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people
- Avoid in person meetings
- Eliminate unnecessary travel and cancel or postpone nonessential meetings, gatherings, workshops and training sessions
- Do not congregate in work rooms, pantries, copier rooms, or other areas where people socialize. Keep six feet apart when possible
- Bring lunch and eat at your desk or away from others (avoid lunchrooms)
- Install protective plexiglass screens at counters, receiving stations and between work areas where a six-foot distance is not practical
- Display signage at entrances, near timeclocks, in breakrooms and other communal areas to promote physical distancing at every reasonable opportunity
- Promote physical distancing where employees or vendors may linger by adding floor decals in places like timeclocks and receiving desks
- Close communal areas like breakrooms and outdoor patios to non-employees
- Reduce the number of chairs in breakrooms and cafeterias to allow for proper physical distancing
- Consider staggering shifts to allow for proper distancing where possible

PREPARATION OF THE WORKPLACE

The Occupational Safety and Health Act requires employers to provide employees with a workplace “free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm” to employees. *Employers should inspect buildings to complete a variety of pre-return checks and assessments to ensure a safe and healthy environment.*

Keeping the Workplace Safe

The protocol for protecting yourself and others in the workplace against COVID-19 is outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. These are simple everyday practices that can be used both at home and in the workplace to protect against bacteria and viruses:

Wash your hands frequently



Avoid touching your face



Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow



In addition to the suggested initial professional cleaning, employees should clean personal workspace items that are frequently touched, such as your desk, computer mouse, pens, and keyboard, with cleaning spray or wipes. The CDC suggests following these cleaning and disinfecting practices:

- Normal routine cleaning with soap and water will decrease how much of the virus is on surfaces and objects, which reduces the risk of exposure
- Disinfection using EPA-approved disinfectants against COVID-19 can also help reduce the risk. Frequent disinfection of surfaces and objects touched by multiple people is important
- When EPA-approved disinfectants are not available, alternative disinfectants can be used (for example, 1/3 cup of bleach added to 1 gallon of water, or 70% alcohol solutions). Do not mix bleach or other cleaning and disinfection products together. This can cause fumes that may be very dangerous to breathe in. Keep all disinfectants out of the reach of children. For a list of approved disinfectants follow this link below:

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

EMPLOYEE SAFETY

- Communicate new access points
- Consider a traffic pattern plan to reduce cross contamination or transmission
- Communicate new maximum capacity
- Place hand sanitizing stations at all entry points
- Train employees on proper use of PPE (masks and gloves where required)
- Discuss proper hand washing and sanitizing etiquette
- Assess how to reduce touch points in the building (ex. foot pulls instead of door handles)
- Evaluate ventilation and air flow in your workspace, replacing air filters with high efficiency filters where possible
- Install plexi-glass or sneeze guards to protect employees in their workspace
- Eliminate use of communal items (i.e. candy dishes, writing utensils, staplers, etc.)

CLEANING SUPPLIES

- Review inventory to ensure adequate supply.
- Ensure safety data sheet is available for all chemicals and requirements for safe use are followed
- Require refresher training for general cleaning, site-specific protocol, and proper disinfectant guidelines
- Maintain a log of scheduled cleanings and keep it on display for employee



COVID-19 POSTERS

If you would like to print a poster to display in your department or at your office, we have incorporated the CDC's recommendations in the two versions below. Here are some printing recommendations:

- Print from Adobe Acrobat
- Paper Size: Tabloid (11 x 17 inches)
- Orientation: Vertical
- Scale: 100% (Actual Size)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/stop-the-spread-of-germs.pdf>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/COVID19-symptoms.pdf>

SIGNS FOR THE BUILDING

Click on the icon to use these signs for your offices, breakrooms, bathrooms, and other areas.

Printing Guidelines

Option 1: Poster Size

- Poster size should be 30" x 40" / 76cm x 100cm
- Orientation portrait (vertical)
- Material: Foam core



WHO RETURNS TO WORK?

Risk Assessment

People with risk factors may be more likely to need hospitalization or intensive care if they have COVID-19, or they may be more likely to die of the infection. A risk assessment associated with a potential infectious disease outbreak is imperative as employers are required by OSHA to ensure a healthy and safe working environment.

Some potential risk factors associated with COVID-19 that have been identified to date include:

- Age
- Some medical conditions
- Use of certain medications
- Certain occupations
- Pregnancy



OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Employers may look at categorizing employees according to risk levels as listed below to reduce discrimination liability, determine business continuity, and work accommodations:

◆ **VERY HIGH: (Jobs with a high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19 during specific medical, postmortem, or laboratory procedures)**

- Healthcare providers
- Morticians
- Lab Technicians

PPE Required at all times

◆ **HIGH: (Jobs with a high potential for exposure to known or suspected sources of COVID-19)**

- Healthcare delivery
- Healthcare support
- Medical transport
- Morticians

PPE Required at all times

◆ **MEDIUM: (Jobs that require frequent/close contact with people who may be infected, but who are not known or suspected patients)**

- Employees in client facing positions or high traffic areas
- Employees working in high-population-density environments
- Employees working in high volume retail environments

***May suggest Remote Work options if job function supports and is approved by the manager; implement staggered shifts or alternate shifts to reduce density in the workspace and enforce social distancing measures) ***

◆ **LOW: (Jobs that do not require contact with people known to be, or suspected of being, infected)**

- Employees with no public interaction and work in a confined area in the building with minimum interaction with co-workers

May enforce social distancing measures when moving through the facility or when in contact with other employees

Where applicable, organizations should comply with relevant regulations defining who should and should not return to the physical workplace.

Please also refer to The CDC's decision trees for [workplaces](#).

WHY RETURN TO THE WORKPLACE?

To be productive

- Because of fewer distractions which enables focus and creativity
- To innovate, develop new ideas, and benefit from rapid decision-making when together with others
- To streamline communication channels by replacing emails, calls, virtual meetings with in-person interactions

For the physical work and required tools

- Because of required access to equipment, testing, data infrastructure
- For the compute power, monitors, printers or copiers, and files in a secure environment
- To physically work (e.g., in labs, command centers, manufacturing)

For the people and place

- To access people needed for work-related tasks: leaders, teams, peers, clients, trainers
- As a social outlet: seeing people, being a part of a community with a shared purpose, diversity of thought, camaraderie
- More amenities and food choices than what is accessible from home

WHY WORK FROM HOME?

To be productive

- Because the team can't be all together
- It's easier to work remotely with synchronous communication flow between the entire team using the current technology tools
- Focus is easier when working from home
- To reduce the time lost due to commutes

Individual health and personal situations

- Personal health risks exacerbated by commutes, anxiety from being at the office, or mentally not ready
- Lack of childcare or eldercare options
- Desire to reduce environmental footprint
- Need to minimize commutation costs



REMOTE WORK GUIDELINES

- Determine impact of remote work to productivity
- Identify equipment needed, how it will be distributed and provide training to ensure ongoing productivity.
- Set goals and expectations for working from home (revised performance management systems)
- Identify challenges and address them during training
- Establish regular check-in meetings and methods of communication

- **Communicate for Confidence:** recognize the fear in returning, communicate transparently, listen and survey regularly. Cushion Employer Services will be glad to help you with these communications.

NEW POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Policies will be important in setting the expectation for employees. Many organizations have allowed flexibility into some of their policies, especially those related to time off, remote working and flexible work schedules. Upon setting the new organizational framework coming back into the workplace, organizations should consider what policies need to change or be reinstated.

From the employee's perspective, if policies have been adjusted for an extended period of time—for example, work from home—this may be viewed as the new norm. Organizations should revisit relevant policies and determine the right approach during the transition back to the physical workplace. Communicating the importance of company policies, including any recent updates, and how they map back to the organization's vision will be critical in establishing a climate of employee awareness and compliance.

Policies for consideration might include the following:

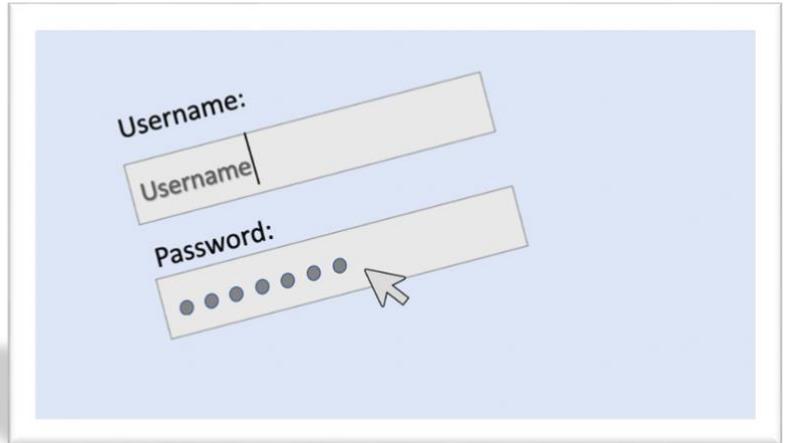
- Return to work policies
- For non-essential roles, determine what WFH policy should be followed
- Protocols around a phased re-introduction of workers based on essential roles to re-open facility
- Policies around temporary help in the event a subset of the full-time workforce becomes unavailable, including policies and practices around accepting and training temporary workers
- Employee travel policies
- When employees should return to work
- Considerations around at-risk groups
- Exceptions and processes for parents/caregivers when schools are closed, or other caregivers are unavailable
- Policies related to WFH environments
- May include ergonomic instructions, stipends, purchase program for WFH tools and equipment

Please see a few attached templates for policies:

- [Remote Work Acknowledgment Form](#)
- [Remote Work Policy](#)
- [Employee COVID-19 Attendance Policy](#)
- [Isolation Room Policy](#)

DATA PRIVACY AND INFORMATION SECURITY

COVID-19 continues to create a challenge in terms of keeping data secure and systems safe from being exploited. This is in part due to an increasing number of cyber criminals exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic, by using fake messaging and other important updates to deliver malware, ransomware, or to steal user credentials. This will happen more and more and is projected to be an issue for the remainder of the year. It is important to be knowledgeable and aware of these more commonly used methods used by cyber criminals:



Social Engineering and Phishing

- Cyber criminals are using COVID-19-themed email phishing, text messages, malicious web sites and applications that often mimic trusted organizations.
- To create the sense of trust, criminals may mask a sender's information in an email to make it appear to come from a trustworthy source like the World Health Organization.
- Emails will usually be vague at first but will then progress to needing sensitive information or unauthorized actions to be completed.

Remote Working Risks

- Transitioning to home working has exposed the use of potentially vulnerable services, increasing the risks to individual team members and organizations.
- With little or no infrastructure in place to protect remote workers, cyber criminals are finding it easier than ever to find vulnerabilities and exploit large systems.

There are a number of ways organizations can mitigate these risks and increases in exploitations

- Continue to educate and inform your employees about these new risks, as well as common security procedures such as two factor authentications.
- Make sure employees are aware of new scams and how to report issues they identify to security teams with the use of things like the "Report Phish" button in their email.
- Validate that protection software is deployed to devices, up-to-date and reporting issues to the security teams.
- Continue to be vigilant about good corporate hygiene by deploying patches and update applications.

ASSESSING AND MAINTAINING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

One of the more significant challenges that businesses will face as we adjust to the new realities created by the COVID-19 pandemic is how to appropriately manage employee engagement. Is your team:

- Adjusting to and creating an environment that will lead to high engagement and productivity, or are they lost?
- Do they understand how to perform their job functions remotely?
- Are they still plugged into the organization's mission, vision, and values?
- Do they see a future with you in this new reality?
- Are they able to appropriately set goals for themselves that help drive your business forward?
- Are your managers communicating with their employees effectively?
- Do employees feel like they have a forum for communicating needs and concerns back to you?
- What do employees see as appropriate levels of service to your customers?



If you are unable to answer these questions, you may find that your organization will drift at this critical time when you need to be adaptable, creative, and proactive. Cushion can help you by custom designing a tool to measure your employee's level of engagement and provide them with a forum to provide feedback to you. Feedback from your employees may well contain a golden nugget that will mean the difference between failure and thriving.

MANAGING PERFORMANCE

We know that clear communication is needed going into the second half of the year for 2020. Employees are wondering about the objectives and strategies of the company, and what changes will be made. These times will not change the uncertainty. The communication to your employees needs to be honest but with a clear path for them to ensure there will be positive engagement. Look at your practices on rewards programs and recognitions. Do they need to be changed? Are the rewards even viable now such as perks in the office? Are your recognitions such as celebrations in a conference room possible now with so many working off-site? What are you doing that will continue to work in 2020? Let Cushion help you develop many new opportunities for these rewards and recognitions.

Going into the next half of the year, look at your development programs. Do the job profiles even apply anymore? Because so many are working from home, should these be rewritten and/or re-classified? Performance evaluations should reflect any changes made to the job profile to adjust for WFH or modified onsite time.

Are you seeing signs of a lack of emotional intelligence from your leaders? Do you have leaders who used this time to develop and teach so that when the new normal opens, they will be ready? Use your strong leaders to help you move through the rough waters ahead to communicate your new strategies. Now is the time to assess those leaders that need more development. How will you accomplish this task? Let Cushion develop customized job profiles and training programs for you to ensure going forward your leadership is as strong as it needs to be to take on the new objectives and strategies of your company.

The new future will be different with training, managing performance, rewards, recognitions. How will you communicate this to all of your organization? Do you have the tools to develop your webinars to be successful? If not, let Cushion Employer Services help. We know how people work.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR NEW LEADERS?

Many of the most valuable employees are leaving organizations due to early retirement packages. We understand the cost to replace those valuable employees can exceed 200% of their annual salary! Organizations are trying to replace or bring back those same employees as consultants.

We recommend that you have succession plans to prepare for the inevitable changes in leadership that will come. You must look at your strategic perspective and develop the next generation of leaders. A future leader will be someone who takes the time to learn your organization and your customers and is capable and desires to move into a leadership role.

Now that many are working from home and managers don't see the performance as much as the final assignment, many may go unrecognized for promotions. We need to find ways to retain these performers, but also retain employees that could be high performers that are not getting the chance to produce. Cushion Employer Services can help you with your employees setting goals and qualifying your expectation of roles to the employee's strengths. We feel you may have your future leaders working for you now in non-leadership roles.

Cushion Employer Services will help you develop customized training so that these future leaders are on a career path to lead your organization. Our first step in our Performance Management System is to find the employee's strengths and weaknesses towards their ability to work in teams. If you have silo mentality employees, they will not be able to lead effectively. Our teaming assessment allows employees to discover their teaming and leadership skills and ways to improve upon their weakest skills. When you identify your future leaders, the next step is to develop them. Developing these future leaders on a path for their new positions along with learning and keeping abreast of all labor laws will protect your organization once they begin their leadership role.

While we are helping you to assess your new leaders, we will teach leaders and managers you currently have so they are able to retain your workforce through setting goals, learning new opportunities, and gaining confidence to move forward. This involves communication with their employees, setting expectations of all roles, encouraging employees to become more engaged and feel more valued, and lastly feeling validated to move your future leaders up the ladder.

Reach out to us. We are here to help.

MITIGATING WORKFORCE ANXIETY

While workplace design, policies and safety protocols are critical pieces of the puzzle, they do not touch on perhaps the most important aspect of return to work—the readiness of the workforce physically, emotionally, and psychologically.

Recognize that these times have been trying for everyone, and the effects will likely take some time to fade. Have a plan in place for your managers to touch base with their team members on how they are faring, and what they need to do their work successfully, especially for those employees who may be maintaining a work from home presence for the foreseeable future. We suggest that managers schedule regular “one on one” sessions with the employees



they manage, whether on the work site or working from home. This will help the employees maintain a sense of team, as well as providing an important opportunity to discuss current work goals, as well as monitoring needs.

Sudden and massive changes to one’s environment, such as the upheaval and uncertainty created by the pandemic, may trigger episodes of depression and anxiety in individuals who have never experienced such symptoms. Those who are already dealing with depression and anxiety may have a more difficult time. Individuals who are prone to alcoholism or substance use issues may be particularly challenged.

Transient changes in an employee’s demeanor and productivity are not unexpected in such times, but these changes may also be indicative of something more serious underlying the change. While we do not encourage managers to pry into areas that may potentially violate the ADA, we do encourage maintaining a more empathic listening ear and being ready to respond to potential concerns in an appropriate manner.

We recommend that a communication be sent to all employees to remind them of resources that are available to them, either through their insurance plan, your EAP if offered, or through local mental health resources. Other resources may be found through the SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration) website: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment>.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Ensuring that employees understand what the workplace will be like upon return is critical. Some employees may expect nothing to change, while others will assume everything will be different. Preparing employees and reminding them that these changes are designed to help keep them safe will ease anxiety, while voids in communication will increase anxiety. Frequent and effective communication is the key to raising employee's confidence that the organization is being well-managed and are keeping their well-being top of mind.

Recommended practices for consideration include:

- Communicate progress as plans are being made for the return to the workplace as soon as they can be confidently communicated. Recommended practices for this will be shared later in the playbook.
- Make sure that your plans are communicated in a way that connect them back to the vision for your organization. This will help employees understand that although the environment has changed, the vision for the organization remains strong.
- Send a communication to employees with the latest information from the CDC regarding who are most at risk for complications from the virus. Encourage them to contact you to explore alternate work arrangements if they have concerns.
- Help employees who are working remotely understand how to continue working toward their goals.
- Provide access to training on tools and methods of working remotely, and how to effectively engage with their teams.



NEAR TERM CONSIDERATIONS

What should you be considering for the interim phase of dealing with the pandemic? Leaders should be able to understand what is happening at all levels of their organization so that interruptions to business flow can be reduced, and as importantly, to share successes and best internal practices for achieving goals.

Additional considerations include:

- Do you have the adequate technological infrastructure to perform effectively?
- Do you have adequate security protocols to protect your information?
- Is work being completed as usual? Are there areas where productivity has decreased, or increased?
- Are employees effectively using the tools available to them to communicate with their teams?
- Are employees maintaining a healthy work-life balance?
- Are managers providing an appropriate level of support? Are they involved too little, or is adapting to remote work causing them to over-manage?
- Are teams staying connected?

- Are customer needs being met?

Enable collaboration between teams and organizations: Collaboration between teams may break if employees can only maintain a subset of their usual interactions. This increases the risk of fragmentation and creating silos. Questions to consider include:

- How are internal networks evolving? Look out for drops in average network size and breadth. This can indicate areas at risk of isolation
- Has cross-functional teaming been disrupted? Look out for drops in collaboration levels between teams as this can indicate a disruption in normal working patterns

What you learn about your organization now will help you define your future new normal.

LONGER TERM CONSIDERATIONS

So, the question is what is going to be the new normal?

Without a crystal ball, it is almost impossible at this point to define what the future new normal will be.



However, as mentioned in the previous section, what you learn about how your organization is performing in this interim phase will help you to define your place in the future new normal.

It is quite likely that many businesses are learning that remote work can be done effectively, and perhaps even more effectively than in the past. Businesses who are successfully learning now how to utilize remote collaboration may very well be setting themselves up to flourish in the new normal.

It is likely that many companies are coming to the realization that some percentage of their workforce will never come back to an office environment—they will be permanent remote workers. This shift is going to have significant impact on how companies think about office space, the real-estate footprint, infrastructure, and the technology that is going to have to be in place long term to support the new work paradigm.

Beyond near-term potential savings on space, the shift could have additional positive impacts. If done correctly, some of the challenges of remote work—feelings of isolation, increased after-hours work and so forth—may be offset by increased employee engagement and satisfaction through more flexible hours, more time with friends and family, savings on transportation costs and avoiding long commutes. Another potential benefit of remote work is having a far broader pool of potential employees from which to recruit. There is a lot to figure out as we continue to manage the current situation. But the good news is that with tools, technology and insights to be able to make better decisions, we can look at ways to minimize disadvantages and embrace the positives. Cushion will be here to help you with each step along the way.

RE-CLOSING PROCEDURES

The final part of monitoring and reassessment is recognizing that due to the nature of the pandemic, the environment may change quickly. After resuming worksite-based operations, it is possible that the Governor, Mayor or other official may issue another “safer at home” or “stay at home” order. It is also possible that if you have more than one employee who tests positive for the virus, you may decide to close operations for a time to ensure the safety of your employees. Flexibility and planning will be key to maintaining smooth business operations through the duration of the pandemic.



Here is a checklist of recommended actions to take to ensure that you are able to respond rapidly and effectively to future closure orders:

- Decide who will be responsible for monitoring news and government websites for information related to future closure orders, who will make the decision to close, and how will the announcement be communicated to the organization.
- Determine what your trigger will be to make an internal decision to close, i.e., number of positive employees, number of exposures, etc.
- As discussed earlier in this document, ensure that you know which of your positions can work from home, and which must perform their duties onsite.
- If duties must be performed onsite, determine if those duties are critical to maintaining operations, ensure that those employees performing critical duties have “travel letters” in case they are stopped by authorities on their way to or from work, and ensure that they have received training in how to safely perform their duties during the period of shutdown. Quickly communicate to those employees that the organization is resuming emergency operations, what their schedule will be, and who to contact in case of an onsite emergency.
- For hourly employees who will be working from home, establish a method of tracking time worked.
- For hourly employees who are not able to work from home, determine if they will be paid and for how long. If furloughing or laying off employees, consider filing a mass unemployment claim to make the transition easier for them.
- For the duration of the pandemic, make sure that your employees designated as work from home capable leave at the end of each day with the equipment and materials they will need to perform their duties from home. If the closure order comes after the end of the workday, make sure the communication reaches those employees before the beginning of the next workday. Establish a call list to make sure that each employee has been contacted.
- At the end of each day, make sure to follow all security protocols as if you will not be returning for a few weeks. Make sure that messages can be retrieved remotely and that incoming phone calls can be redirected as appropriate.
- Make sure that all work from home employees maintain their knowledge about security protocols, how to securely access digital files through your VPN, and how to retrieve phone messages.
- Ask your IT department/provider to frequently monitor and test your IT security systems to make sure they are operating as expected.

CHECKLIST | COVID-19 AND YOUR WORKPLACE

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread rapidly throughout the United States. Keep your employees and their families safe by properly preparing your workplace. Consider the strategies outlined below to ensure that your workplace is prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keeping Employees Healthy	DONE	NEEDS TO BE DONE
Actively encourage sick employees to stay home, either taking paid time off or working from home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Promote and facilitate working from home whenever possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance, and that employees are aware of these policies.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Place posters at the entrance to your workplace that encourage staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette, and hand hygiene.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instruct employees to wash their hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer should be used whenever normal hand-washing isn't an option.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide soap and water, and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encourage employees to keep a 6-foot distance between each other.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Encourage all meetings to be held virtually.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider canceling business-related events that involve gatherings of 50 people or more.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops and doorknobs. Use standard cleaning agents and follow the directions on the label.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls and desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advise employees to reconsider any nonessential travel plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider canceling any business-related travel plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
For employees who travel, implement a policy that directs them to work from home or take paid time off for seven to 14 days, depending on where they traveled and whether they are exhibiting any symptoms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

KEEPING EMPLOYEES INFORMED	DONE	NEEDS TO BE DONE
Create an action plan for communicating important business updates to employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deliver regular company updates with information about what your company is doing to keep employees safe and healthy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that your IT infrastructure is equipped to handle more employees working from home and increased frequency of communications.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide communications in as many formats as possible to ensure that your message is accessible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

KEEPING EMPLOYEES PROTECTED	DONE	NEEDS TO BE DONE
Review leave policies and consider revising them to add flexibility for COVID-19-related leave.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Review policies to ensure that employees could still be paid in the event of a company closure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expand or enhance telecommuting policies to help keep employees away from the office.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expand or enhance IT and cyber security policies to prepare for employees working from home.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Review business continuity practices to prepare for a potential business closure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

As the situation continues to progress, it's important that you keep your compliance obligations in mind while you prepare your business to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

VISITORS, VENDORS, AND EMPLOYEES SCREENING FORM

Date: _____

The safety of our employees, vendors, and visitors is our primary concern. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the potential risk of exposure to our visitors, vendors, and employees, we are conducting a simple screening questionnaire. It is important that you help us take precautionary measures to protect you and everyone in our building.

Thank you.

EMPLOYEE NAME	
VENDOR – name and company	
VISITOR – name and who you are visiting	
TIME	
EMAIL	
Are you currently experiencing any of these signs or symptoms below	
YES / NO	TEMPERATURE HIGHER THAN 100.4 DEGREES
YES / NO	COUGH, SNEEZING, AND/OR RUNNING NOSE
YES / NO	SHORTNESS OF BREATH AND/OR DIFFICULTY BREATHING
YES / NO	MUSCLE PAIN
YES / NO	TIREDNESS AND/OR HEADACHES
YES / NO	Is this information you provided true and correct to the best of your knowledge?
CURRENT TEMP	
Signature	



TRAININGS

In an effort to help you with your training needs at this critical time, Cushion is providing you with the free trainings below. We are also available to customize and extend these trainings to meet your specific needs, as well as develop training programs to cover many other areas in the realm of human resources.

- [Working from Home](#)
- [Managing Remotely](#)
- [2020 Leaders](#)
- [Annual Harassment Training](#)
- [Onboarding During COVID-19](#)