



A Considered Return to the (Physical) Office

It has been a whirlwind year with the shift to remote working no longer a novelty but a way of life ! and with the relaxing of regulations in various countries, some companies are beginning to plan the phased return to the physical office.

In most cases it can be a staged process, so how should this be approached, what is needed in terms of planning and preparation?

In this weeks Tip Sheet, our remote working expert, *Rowena Hennigan* shares some tips to help you plan your approach.

- 1. Take the time needed to transition back .** The return to the physical office will most probably be in stages so take the time needed to plan for the change. The difference in the transition back to the office as COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed, is that there is more time to prepare. Take the time needed to process the recent months, be intentional, both on an individual, manager and corporate level prior to rushing towards the newest state of change.
- 2. Build in that time to reflect and process the recent period.** Many individuals were left reeling during the period of crisis response. Therefore, many will welcome the opportunity to discuss openly recent times, successes and challenges. Enabling these conversations will also highlight positives and operational improvements from remote working, which can be built upon.
- 3. Continued Empathy and Understanding.** Considering the above, fatigue has set in. Many individuals are craving holidays or a break from the tough routine of the recent period, which was compounded by the stresses in the external environment as a result of the pandemic. A reminder to managers and leaders to extend their expression of empathy and understanding to their teams. Enabling the supports needed and encouraging work-life balance where possible.
- 4. Lessons learned and celebrate success.** Conduct a formal review of operational processes during the working from home period, documenting successes and challenges. This will provide the foundation for planning for the transition back to the office and the hybrid model.

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Another way of doing this exercise is to do a retrospective on a specific project or project phase with the relevant team members involved. A “snapshot” review analysis, will enable a better view of what did and didn’t work during the period. Also on an individual level, encourage workers to assess learnings gained during the period. Of course, celebrate the success, take the time to acknowledge what has worked and celebrate it!

- 5. Wellbeing is still paramount .** One thing is certain over these coming months, change will be a constant again for the foreseeable. Continuing to emphasis the importance of well-being, will bolster this next phase and support its success as workers feel empowered to reach out, request help and strive to maintain individual work-life balance.