



COVID-19

REWORKING HOW WE WORK – HOW TO MANAGE THE EVOLVING WORKPLACE

As we start to reintegrate back into a new working routine, what impact is the pandemic going to have on the workplace and what do managers, leaders and directors need to be wary of as it begins to take shape? Dr Stuart Lustig, National Medical Executive, Behavioural Health at Cigna and Michelle Leung, HR Officer, Cigna International Markets, share their thoughts.

Life might not be back to normal, but the wheels of the business world are beginning to turn once more, with companies across the world starting to reintroduce employees and trial new working practices.

Naturally, for HR in particular, this new working normal will have a huge impact, starting with recruitment. “The new working normal is going to impact all areas within HR and the organisation and how we actually manage our human capital,” explains Michelle Leung, HR Officer, Cigna International Markets. “So for example, the way that we attract, recruit, and onboard new employees is going to be different – even how they go through their orientation is going to be very different.”

When that workforce is in place, both old and new, may not be ‘present’ in the way they once were, providing a different challenge. “We’ll be looking at a set of different leadership competencies to make sure that leaders are equipped to manage a virtual workforce,” continues Michelle. “They are then able to measure performance and contribution for a virtual workforce.

“And then we also have to think about talent deployment when travel restrictions are likely to still be in

place,” she adds. “We will not be able to travel as freely, we will not be able to meet other colleagues in different offices as we used to before. But how do we still keep the connection? How do we build our network? So, these are all different challenges that we have to think through and be thoughtful of.”

The people that you manage will have also changed, as may well have you, as lockdown has created an always-on culture whereby many of us juggle several roles at the same time: colleague, parent, friend, sibling. “Half of the respondents in



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the Cigna COVID-19 Global Impact Study indicated that they are working longer hours,” explains Dr Stuart Lustig, National Medical Executive, Behavioural Health at Cigna. “And so, it’s important for managers and employers to realize that employees are juggling more now than probably ever before.

“In addition to working longer hours, they’re also dealing with family situations, caretaking obligations that they may not have typically, and just trying to get everything done in the course of the day.

“What’s going to be most helpful is for managers and employers to recognize the need for greater flexibility. And while people are working longer, the good news is that they are appreciative of the flexibility as well, and the opportunity to fit things into their day as best as possible.”

Communicating what’s expected in the work environment will remain key. “There will probably need to be some adjustments, in terms of what the deliverables are, given the extenuating circumstances that people are working under,” says Dr Lustig.

“And don’t forget, even though in many cases lockdown rules have been eased, not every employee will be eager to return to the new working environment. I think some of them will still have concerns – quite rightly so,” explains Michelle. “Some of the typical questions that they will ask in order for them feel

comfortable returning to work are: How do I continue to observe social distancing at work? What is the seating arrangement? Will my employer supply me with masks? Will there will be hand sanitizers around in the office? Will my temperature be taken as one of the usual entrance protocols? Can I still have team meetings? Can I go out? And these are very typical questions and right questions to ask.”

Right now, the questions should come from both sides, as it is more important than ever to check-in on your employees to help manage



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their well-being. “Check-in conversations should not be one-way conversations,” says Michelle. “It’s not when managers have the conversation with an employee to check-in on how much work they’ve done. These check-in conversations, particularly during the transition period, are really important for managers themselves to understand what more they can do to support their team and their employees.

“Are there any obstacles they need to help remove? Do their employees need additional training? What are the challenges they may have at home? Do they have child care challenges, elder care challenges? And I think these conversations must be made frequently.”

Check-in regularly and you not only stay connected with your team, but also help them to understand their managers really do care about them as people as well as employees. “One of the big concerns about people being alienated either from each other, or from the work that they’re doing, is that they’re more likely to leave,” says Dr Lustig. “So, anything we can do to help people stay connected and feeling cared about is useful to do at this point.”

If you’d like to find out more about how to check-in on your colleagues and start the conversation about the new working normal, watch the video below.

[Watch the video here](#)



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team, but also help them to
understand their managers really
do care about them as people as
well as employees.*

Together, all the way.®



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