

Execution Considerations As Part of a Post-COVID Plan

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Whether you've returned to the workplace, are preparing to, or are transitioning to a remote work model, communication will be key to successful execution.

HR leaders need to effectively communicate changes, updates and protocols. Equally important, they want to get and act on feedback from employees throughout their post-COVID-19 return-to-work plans.

"Be versatile with your return-to-work plan," Sameer Chowdhri, Global Head, Workplace for HR at Facebook, told the recent *HRMorning Execution Considerations as Part of a Post-COVID Plan* masterclass. "It's a working culture. Find out what's working and what's not."

CRITICAL FACTORS FOR RTW



Every company will have a unique Return to Work (RTW) plan or remote work model. Facebook's plan is emerging every day as the global organization moves to a mostly remote model.

Execution Considerations As Part of a Post-COVID Plan



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Regardless of the plan any company has, Chowdhri said, these three factors will be critical to success:

- **Transparency.** HR professionals and company leaders will want to build trust right from the beginning by being transparent. Let employees know the plans you're considering, transitions you anticipate, and your openness to feedback. Make leaders directly available to share news and get feedback.
- **Fluid.** Ideally, get a sample group of volunteers to work on and test your return to work plan. They might give regular feedback and be the first back on-site to make sure protocols are practical and work as anticipated. And, if things don't work out as expected, this group can help guide changes.
- **Flexible.** Chowdhri suggested HR leaders get feedback on the RTW plan while it happens. Give employees tools – such as apps like Workplace from Facebook – for real-time feedback. That way, you can do “pulse checks” with brief surveys, and they can alert you to issues such as dwindling PPE or cleaning supplies.

BEST PRACTICES FOR RTW



Facebook has had to navigate work and the coronavirus like most companies – with flexibility, patience and some trial, error and recovery.

Execution Considerations As Part of a Post-COVID Plan



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Through it all, they kept this existing priority in perspective – “People at the center,” said Jo McRell, People Communications Manager at Facebook. “It’s useful to keep grounding yourself.”

McRell said HR leaders and front-line managers can help employees transition from what were their norms into the new realities – whether that’s heading back into a different on-site culture or shifting to a fully remote situation.

Facebook highlights some best practices when executing RTW:

- **Care.** “Showing care is really important,” McRell said. “The lines between personal and professional have blurred and there’s a real need for empathy.” Employees need to know their bosses and the company care about their professional, physical and mental well-being.
- **Trust.** “When (employees) know trust is a real goal for leadership, that makes a real difference,” McRell said. Employees can stay better focused on their work when they believe their leaders are working toward what’s safe and best for them.
- **Inclusion.** Facebook keeps inclusion and diversity at the center of its initiatives as it returns to its new work normal.

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KEYS TO COMMUNICATING PRIORITIES IN THE HR PLAN



How you communicate changes in HR plans as your RTW experience evolves is just as important as what you communicate.

Two keys:

- **Bring employees into the communication equation.** “The days of one-way communication flow are done,” McRell said. Find ways to bring employees into the formation and delivery of new HR plans. Get their feedback from the beginning of the process. Then show everyone the kind of feedback you’ve received – both what you solicited and what came in organically – and how you responded to it.
- **Share regularly and repeatedly.** Communicate your HR message across all the channels employees use. You can share the same message more than once in different forms to make sure they get it.

Execution Considerations As Part of a Post-COVID Plan



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BEST PRACTICES FOR COMMUNICATING HR PLANS



In the wake of COVID-19 and its effects on the workplace, Facebook HR pros and front-line managers found some communication practices were particularly effective.

“For us, it’s less about communicating *to* people and more about communicating *with* people,” McRell said.

To maintain effective communication, Facebook:

- **Prioritizes an open culture.** They share HR information across channels and consistently get feedback. Part of that comes through weekly company-wide meeting with CEO Mark Zuckerberg, who takes submitted and live questions and shares company status and vision. They also have a feature on their workplace app for groups to connect, share and meet virtually. Some groups are project teams or departments. Other groups are more social, geared for people with specific interests and created for diversity and inclusion.
- **Promotes and engages in real-time communication.** “We can help evolve and shape conversations as they happen, not just direct them. We can understand sentiment, and reposition conversations if things get off track,” McRell said. The real-time feedback, through pulse surveys and focus groups help her and HR pros react immediately to what employees care about and need.

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- **Re-focuses on communication fundamentals.** With so much real-time feedback and constant progress in RTW and HR programs, Facebook needs employees to know exactly where to go for information. So they promote where employees can find the most up-to-date information – and where they can discuss it.
- **Leveled the engagement field.** With the focus on remote work, Facebook found it could create a more equitable engagement experience. Now nearly everyone can participate in, comment during and give feedback on live events that were once only available to people at specific locations.

AVOID INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION OVERLOAD



It's important to recognize the challenges created by the volume and rapid evolution of the information you are sharing and the growing variety of channels you can push it through.

"We live in an information overload world, and in times of crisis – like COVID-19 – it can be even more overwhelming," McRell said.

To avoid letting important information getting lost, McRell suggested:

Execution Considerations As Part of a Post-COVID Plan

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- **Be clear on the priorities.** Leaders want to regularly remind employees of goals, so they recognize where to focus their attention and time.
- **Stay audience-focused.** Avoid sending messages to everyone. Unless it is truly an “all-hands” message, share targeted information only with the people who need to know, will benefit from and must act on the information.
- **Consider influencers.** Use the people who have influence in certain areas of the organization to spread the word, talk to colleagues and even relay feedback to you. “Cut through the noise by getting to your influencers,” McRell said.
- **Use signals.** Consistently put some form of signal – for instance, color-coded flags, road signs, or emojis - near the top on messages – and encourage all leaders to do the same. Your chosen signals should indicate if the information is critical, something that needs attention, an FYI or just good to know. That way people know what to do with the information as soon as they see the sign.

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